

“WORD AND POWER”: INCREASING SUPERNATURAL MINISTRY
THROUGH A MODIFICATION OF “DISCIPLE: BECOMING
DISCIPLES THROUGH BIBLE STUDY”

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A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Dayton, Ohio
May 2020

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ABSTRACT

“WORD AND POWER”: INCREASING SUPERNATURAL MINISTRY THROUGH A MODIFICATION OF “DISCIPLE: BECOMING DISCIPLES THROUGH BIBLE STUDY”

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The context was a medium-sized suburban United Methodist church with a perceived lack of supernatural works of the Holy Spirit. The method was a six-week portion of “Word and Power” (W&P), a modified version of “Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study,” which included teaching, training, and application in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. The project strongly validated the hypothesis that W&P participants would increase in supernatural understanding, practice, and ministry. A qualitative phenomenological comparison showed W&P as a potential way to introduce the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit into the life of a United Methodist congregation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Nothing like this DMin project is possible without the work of the Holy Spirit. “For in him we live and move and have our being.” Thank you Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Three in One, for giving me life, life abundant, and life eternal.

I am greatly appreciative of the two churches that I pastored during the course of this Doctor of Ministry work. I started as the Wellspring Contemporary Worship preaching pastor at First United Methodist Church of McKinney. I completed the project as the senior pastor of First United Methodist Church of Irving. The people in both of these congregations were amazingly supportive and encouraging. May the work of the Holy Spirit continue to be made manifest in the lives of these congregations.

Dr. Frank Billman was more than a faculty mentor. He was a friend, confidant, encourager, and a light of Christ. I owe him much, but I might have to start with a large supply of red pens! Faculty adviser Dr. Scott Kisker is a gifted teacher who lived out what he taught. He is a strong voice for the work of the Holy Spirit and the Methodist Movement. He impacted this project in invaluable ways. I only wish I could remember and live out everything Dr. Billman and Dr. Kisker were trying to show me!

Finally I wish to thank my wife, Jana. This Doctor of Ministry work was made possible by her love, her prayers, her wisdom, and her not-so-gentle push! May our lives together in Christ continue to be rich and rewarding.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all those who wish to see an increase in the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives and in their churches. May your lives and your churches be blessed by the Word of God in Scripture and the Power of God in the Holy Spirit. Remember that you only need to have faith the size of a mustard seed. Even when doubts creep in, you can pray this honest prayer: “I believe, help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24).

²⁹ “And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰ while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:29-31, ESV)

“Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love!”

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASV	American Standard Version Bible
CEB	Common English Bible
DBS	<i>Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study</i>
DFW	Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex
DMin	Doctor of Ministry
ESV	English Standard Version Bible
FUMC	First United Methodist Church
FUMC-Irving	First United Methodist Church of Irving
FUMC-McKinney	First United Methodist Church of McKinney
KJV	King James Version Bible
NIV	New International Version Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version Bible
PD#	DBS Participant Number (in lieu of using names)
PW#	W&P Participant Number (in lieu of using names)
UMC	United Methodist Church (or United Methodist is UM used)
W&P	“Word and Power” Bible Study
Wesley	Refers to John Wesley. When speaking of his brother, “Charles” or “Charles Wesley” will be used.

If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 per cent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 per cent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference.

— Attributed to Aiden Wilson (A.W.) Tozer

INTRODUCTION

American theologian and Christian author Aiden Wilson (A.W.) Tozer is credited with saying, “If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 per cent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 per cent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference.”¹ The theme of this project is to increase supernatural ministry in the life of a church that may have no felt need for “signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to God’s will” (Heb. 2:4).² There may not be a perceived need for supernatural ministry in a church that is doing good ministry under the leadership of a good pastor, but is the church living up to its full God-given potential without being open to and accessing the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit? The heart of this Doctor of Ministry (DMin) project is to introduce the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit into the ministry of a church, specifically a United Methodist church, even if there seemed to be no apparent need for it.

¹ Mark Woods, “AW Tozer: 10 Quotes from a 20th Century Prophet,” *Christian Today*, March 31, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2017, <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/aw-tozer-10-quotes-from-a-20th-century-prophet/83048.htm>.

² Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

How can supernatural ministry be introduced into a United Methodist Church where there is no felt need for it? One potential answer to this question is to take an existing, well-received Bible study and modify it to include supernatural teaching, training, and application. First United Methodist Church of Irving (FUMC-Irving), like many United Methodist Churches, is familiar with the *Disciple Bible Study* series. The first year of the series is called *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study*³ (DBS). This project implemented a modification to DBS that added a supernatural emphasis including teaching, training, and application in the supernatural power of God.⁴ This modification to DBS is called “Word and Power” (W&P).

The hypothesis of this project is that the implementation of a portion of W&P will increase the supernatural understanding, practice, and ministry of the participants in comparison to participants in the corresponding portion of DBS. W&P, which emphasizes the supernatural work of God in Scripture, was anticipated to increase the supernatural work of God in the lives of the participants, not only in their understanding and personal practice, but also in their ministry to others. The supernatural work of God includes but is not limited to: hearing the voice of God (whether audible or not), responding to God’s promptings, visions and dreams, words of knowledge, healing, prophecy, miracles, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, and deliverance.

The “Bible Study” oriented approach of the widely used and accepted DBS was maintained by keeping similar Bible readings for each lesson and including a “Bible

³ Richard B. Wilke and Julia K. Wilke, *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study, Study Manual* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993).

⁴ The idea for this project came to me during a soaking prayer event at an Aldersgate Renewal Ministries annual conference. There is spiritual irony in supernaturally receiving an idea for adding a supernatural focus to an existing Bible study and then having this idea become part of a DMin project in the supernatural focus group at United Theological Seminary that is related to Aldersgate Renewal Ministries.

Teachings” section that helped participants understand the biblical passages read.

However, W&P was modified to include an emphasis on the supernatural work of God as seen in Scripture and witnessed in present life. This was accomplished through a changed emphasis in the “Bible Teaching” portion of the curriculum and with different exercises, both at-home and during the group sessions, that emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit. The title of the modified study, “Word and Power,” is meant to emphasize uniting the study of the Word of God in Scripture with a Spirit-led approach to seeing and accessing the supernatural power of God.

This project developed out of a background not of failure, but of success. Personal success and ecclesial success can occur through hard work that takes advantage of God-given abilities and gifts. Personally, I have much to be thankful for in this regard as I have enjoyed career success both as an engineer and as a pastor. The church in which I started this DMin, First United Methodist Church of McKinney (FUMC-McKinney), has much to be thankful for in how faithful members and pastors over the years have made the church one of the fastest growing United Methodist churches in America and one with a great reputation for local and international mission work. The church in which the project portion was implemented, FUMC-Irving, has much to be thankful for in terms of active ministry even though they have been declining in membership over the past forty years. So, what is missing in the growing McKinney church? What is missing in the declining Irving church? In both cases, there is little visible supernatural work (signs and wonders) of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church and even a perceived lack of acknowledgement that this is even missing.

In his analysis of God's anointing on a pastor, which also applies to a church, former pastor of Westminster Chapel and author R.T. Kendall examined the anointing of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Leaders (or churches) with yesterday's anointing rely on old ways and previous callings. They "thrive with their natural skills, grace-gifts, strong personality and influential platform." Kendall completes this sentence with the following remarkable statement, "... and lead many people."⁵ Yes, success is possible with yesterday's anointing. Based upon this type of success there exists a strong perception that reliance on natural skills, grace-gifts, strong personalities, and influential platforms is enough. This is true of pastors like me and churches like FUMC-McKinney. Churches like FUMC-Irving may be declining, but is it simply because they are not using their skills and gifts effectively enough, or maybe because their personalities are not strong and influential enough, or maybe because they are simply not working hard enough or smart enough? Maybe it is time to say "Enough!" to enough!

If Tozer's driving quote about the Holy Spirit in the church is even partially correct, churches, whether successful or declining, should move away from operating on their own strengths and move toward relying on the work of the Holy Spirit, as did the New Testament church. However, to operate like the New Testament church is different, seems risky, and reveals the fear of the unknown. The pressures on the pastor also inhibit moving towards a fresh anointing which relies fully on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. A church may lose membership (and the corresponding financial resources) by moving away from the tried and true practices of the old ways. A church may also feel too fragile because of decline to attempt something so radical. Pastors (like me) who are

⁵ R.T. Kendall, *The Anointing: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2003), 57.

feeling God's new call and present anointing to rely more fully on the work of the Holy Spirit may hold back out of fear. There is certainly fear of failure, but there is also fear of success because supernatural success may look and feel very different from previous success. These pastors and other leaders⁶ may need to echo a father's honest cry to Jesus, "I believe, help my unbelief!"⁷ May they risk natural success to truly encounter the power of God in the supernatural!

Chapter One of this thesis outlines the contexts of both FUMC-McKinney and FUMC-Irving. At FUMC-McKinney, the first draft of W&P was written during the process of teaching a full year of DBS, modifying the study as the year progressed to develop W&P. The actual project, a six-week portion of W&P and a corresponding six-week portion of DBS, was implemented at FUMC-Irving. This chapter also outlines my spiritual autobiography that, connected with the church contexts, led to W&P.

Chapter Two is a biblical study of 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, which reveals the importance of the pastor and/or leader in being open to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in order for the group they influence to do the same. In this passage, Paul speaks of the gospel coming to the people of Thessalonica "not only in word, but also in power" (1:5). This important phrase was, I believe, given to me by God for the project title, "Word and Power." Also, in this biblical passage, Paul focused on the reception of the gospel in word and power through imitation and example. Paul presented himself to the Thessalonian church as one to imitate (the Greek word, *mimetes*). In response the church became an example (the Greek word, *tupon*) to others. The word *tupon* refers to a mold

⁶ These leaders may be Sunday School teachers, Bible study leaders, youth pastors, children's ministers, home group leaders, and many others who feel a fresh anointing to have the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit be more present in their lives and the lives of those they influence.

⁷ Mark 9:24.

that is made by impressing on an original, which in turn is used to mold others into the same shape. This provides a strong illustration for God working through believers. Paul was impressed upon by Christ so that Paul spoke and acted as Christ would. By imitating Paul, the Thessalonian believers in turn became impressed upon so that they were molds for others, leading them to speak and act like Christ.

Pastors and leaders are meant to be imitated. However, this imitation must be in the manner of what Jesus said and did. By his teaching and miracles, Jesus brought the gospel “not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thess. 1:5). Pastors and leaders should desire to so fully imitate Jesus that they become a *tupon* of Christ, an example of Christ in them. Then others, who imitate them, will be imitating Jesus as well. W&P emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit, both in Scripture and in the lives of the participants. Participants will encounter the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in Scripture, but also be asked to open their lives to the work of the Holy Spirit. The supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the leader(s) will be critical as an example for participants. However, the leader and participants are on the journey together. As the group encounters the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in Scripture and in their lives, they in turn become examples to others in the life of the church.

Chapter Three focuses on the supernatural spiritual heritage of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement leading to a number of denominations, including The United Methodist Church. Many Methodists are familiar with John Wesley and his Aldersgate experience on May 24, 1738, where his heart was strangely warmed. This event is often referred to as Wesley’s conversion experience or, maybe more rightly so,

his experience of assurance of salvation. However, Wesley also had a transformative experience in the power of the Holy Spirit. Less well known, but arguably even more important to the Methodist Revival of the 1700's, is the Pentecostal-type event at the Fetter Lane society meeting of January 1, 1739, where Wesley proclaimed that "the power of God came mightily upon us."⁸

Prior to Aldersgate, Wesley was a hard-working clergyman with what would be considered in modern church structure as successful ministry both in England and America. Just like Kendall's "yesterday anointing," Wesley had an abundance of natural skills, grace-gifts, a strong personality and an influential platform. Although overshadowed by the Methodist Revival that followed, Wesley achieved great success as a student at Oxford, as a preacher and teacher, and as a missionary to America. Not many could boast by the age of thirty-five to have helped start a college Christian group⁹, ministered to prisoners on death row, lectured as Fellow of Lincoln College at Oxford, had sermons published, grown congregations on a mission field, published the first hymnal in a foreign country¹⁰, been called to pastor their father's parish¹¹, and started a Christian society¹². However, there is little evidence of the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in Wesley's life and ministry as evidenced by the lack of supernatural occurrences in Wesley's journal up to the time of Aldersgate and Fetter Lane.

⁸ John Wesley, "January 1, 1739," *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976–), vol. 19, 29.

⁹ The "Holy Club."

¹⁰ The *Collection of Psalms and Hymns* published in Charleston, SC, in 1736.

¹¹ Epworth, England.

¹² Fetter Lane.

Wesley personally struggled with this faith during this time, even crying out, “Lord, help thou my unbelief!” and wondering “whether I ought not to refrain from teaching others.”¹³ This is a man who was realizing that there was more to faith than hard work. But did the Aldersgate experience solve this problem? In the approximately seven months between Aldersgate (May 24, 1738) and the Fetter Lane experience (January 1, 1739) there are few “signs and wonders” supernatural occurrences (if any at all, depending on how one defines “signs and wonders”) recorded by Wesley. Also, during this same seven months, Wesley continued to write about his spiritual depression and angst. Wesley’s personal transformation seemed incomplete after Aldersgate.

Then, at the Fetter Lane meeting of January 1, 1739, the Holy Spirit came upon Wesley and his friends in power. In stark comparison to the seven months after Aldersgate, the seventh months after the Pentecostal-type event of January 1, 1739, Wesley records at least thirty-one clear “signs and wonders” supernatural occurrences. In addition, within a few weeks of January 1, 1739, evidence of Wesley’s spiritual depression and angst disappears in his journal. Something spiritually significant happened following the Fetter Lane meeting that was not as apparent following Aldersgate. Wesley was transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the Methodist Revival did not begin until after January 1, 1739. He became a pastor/leader who could be imitated in the works of the Holy Spirit. In turn, those transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit during Wesley’s preaching, Methodist Society meetings, and class/band meetings could be examples to others.

¹³ Wesley, “May 23, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 18, 234.

Chapter Four presents a pneumatological approach to Scripture that emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit not only in the writing of Scripture but also in the reading of Scripture. Wesley followed in the footsteps of Pietists in emphasizing the work of the Holy Spirit in the reading of Scripture. Wesley writes about Scripture: “The Spirit of God not only once inspired those who wrote it, but continually inspires, supernaturally assists, those that read it with earnest prayer.”¹⁴ Thus, because of the work of the Holy Spirit, Bible studies are one valid approach to introduce the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit into a congregation.

Three pietists are discussed: Philip Spener, August Francke, and Johann Bengel. Spener is considered to have begun the modern Bible study movement by emphasizing the importance of Christians reading the entire Bible. He suggests group Bible reading and study that leads to not only learning Scripture but also putting Scripture into practice. Francke built on Spener’s approach by emphasizing that, while academic rigor in understanding the text is necessary, the basic understanding of the text is guided by the Holy Spirit. Although academically rigorous, Francke did not aim simply for knowledge but also for an experience of Scripture whereby the soul is transformed. Speaking to this last theme of avoiding simple head knowledge, Bengel warned that the scholarly study of the Bible could become an end in itself. Mere reasoning is insufficient and even dangerous in understanding Scripture.

The Pietists emphasized the need for the Holy Spirit in understanding Scripture. Their primary objective in reading and understanding Scripture was holiness of heart and life. Wesley took up this mantle from the Pietists by maintaining that Scripture was the

¹⁴ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (London, UK: Epworth Press, 1950), 794.

primary source for Christian belief and practice. Wesley, however, more overtly understood the Bible to plainly suggest the supernatural work (miracles, signs and wonders) of the Holy Spirit to be active in Christian belief and practice.

That the supernatural work of God is present in Scripture may be clear to some, but a new revelation to others. Professor Emeritus Jon Ruthven of Regent University School of Divinity argues that the supernatural work of God is an emphasis of Scripture. Ruthven writes: “the miracle-producing word of God revealed directly to our hearts is the central process in the Bible ... [and] obedience to this word results in the mighty acts of God.”¹⁵ Thus the supernatural work of God present in Scripture can and should lead participants to be open to an encounter with the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

The “Discovery Bible Study” (not to be confused with *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study* or DBS) is presented as an example of the study of the power of God in Scripture that was then demonstrated in the lives of participants. “Discovery” was especially used in various Muslim-dominated societies which resulted in participants engaging God’s Word deeply, having God’s Word address practical life questions, seeing their lives changed through reading Scripture, and listening to the Holy Spirit draw them closer to God. Evidence from the use of “Discovery” revealed the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit showing up in many miraculous ways. This is an example of a transformative Bible study.

Chapter Five presents an analysis of transformative learning theory as a model for moving from knowledge to being truly changed. Transformation is at the heart of DBS

¹⁵ Jon M. Ruthven, *What’s Wrong With Protestant Theology?: Tradition vs. Biblical Emphasis* (Tulsa, OK: Word and Spirit Press, 2013), 296.

where there is an explicit call for “persons to submit themselves to examination by Scripture, to put themselves under the power of God’s word, and to be changed by God’s word.”¹⁶ W&P seeks to maintain these transformation principles and extend them to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.

Phases of transformative learning as applied to ministry was developed by Presbyterian Minister Rev. Dr. Curtis Young. These phases are: (1) disorienting dilemma, (2) journey of desperate hope, (3) transforming moment, (4) surge of vitality, and (5) growth.¹⁷ These elements are shown to be encouraged, intentionally or not, in DBS. W&P intends to maintain these elements of transformational Bible study with an intentional effort to explicitly discuss and expect the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the participants. W&P anticipates participants to encounter the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit as revealed in Scripture. By overtly encouraging participants of W&P to consider God’s supernatural power in Scripture, the transformative learning of DBS is extended to increase the supernatural understanding, practice and ministry of participants.

Chapter Six presents the project implementation and the results of the study. One of the advantages of a Bible study is that it can be introduced into the life of a congregation as a normal part of church ministry. In The United Methodist Church, DBS has been extremely well-received since being introduced in 1987; it is commonly used in churches of all sizes, locations, ethnicities, and socio-economic conditions. It may be possible to minimize the fear factor of the supernatural works of God by introducing them through a study modeled after DBS. This is the intended design of W&P, which

¹⁶ Nellie M. Moser, ed., *Disciple: Becoming Disciple Through Bible Study, Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1987), 6.

¹⁷ Curtis Young, “Transformational Learning in Ministry,” *Christian Education Journal* Series 3, 10, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 329-34.

even has the look and feel of DBS with a similar looking study manual and class-time format. First and foremost, like DBS, the Scripture is encountered first in W&P (typically days one to five of the study manual homework) and the Bible teaching commentary on the Scriptures comes at the end (day six of the homework). W&P seeks for participants to see the supernatural work of God directly in the biblical text and then be open to that same power working in their lives.

Although W&P is designed, like DBS, as a thirty-four week study, this DMin project implemented a trial of six weeks using three Old Testament lessons and three New Testament lessons. Two concurrent classes were facilitated by this researcher. One class followed the original DBS teaching plan and the second class implemented the W&P curriculum. Both classes had approximately the same number of students who signed up for the classes after Sunday morning worship. Pre- and post-surveys, class notes, journals, and post-class interviews were used to evaluate the hypothesis that participants of W&P would show an increase in their understanding, practice, and ministry in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. The supernatural work of God can include, but is not limited to, hearing the voice of God, visions and dreams, words of knowledge, healing, prophecy, miracles, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, and deliverance.

The hope is that this study will be a continuation of the efforts to bring renewal to The United Methodist Church and beyond. There are certainly UMC churches and UMC pastors that are much further along in the understanding, practice, and ministry in the supernatural works of the Holy Spirit. However, W&P may provide an opportunity to

introduce these themes into the lives of pastors, leaders and churches that desire to begin their journey toward being truly Spirit-led. Come Holy Spirit!

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

In the Gospel of Mark, while Jesus is on the mountain being transfigured in front of three disciples, the other disciples were in the valley surrounded by a great crowd. The disciples on the mountain saw the glory of the Lord and heard the voice of God (Mark 9:1-7). In contrast, the other disciples were arguing with the scribes about a demonized boy (Mark 9:14-29). The father of the boy later said to Jesus, “I asked your disciples to cast [the demon] out, and they were not able” (9:18). Why was the power of God not revealed? Jesus chastised those standing there saying, “O faithless generation” (9:19). In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus told the disciples they could not cast out the demon “because of your little faith” (Matt. 17:20).

The power of God is revealed in Jesus Christ on the mountain but is unrevealed in the disciples in the valley because of their lack of faith. On the mountain, there were only three disciples, but in the valley, there was a great crowd. On the mountain, the voice of God silenced the three disciples with the command, “Listen to him!” In the valley, the other disciples were involved in a raging theological debate with the scribes. On the mountain, the glory of the Lord was revealed in the cloud and overshadowed everything. In the valley, the disciples were powerless over the demon. What a contrast!

In the middle of this contrast are the boy and his father. When Jesus comes down from the mountain, the father pleads, “If you can do anything, have compassion on us and

help us.” Jesus exclaims, ““If you can’! All things are possible for one who believes” (Mark 9:24). The father responds, “I believe; help my unbelief!” The father was honest in his faith struggle. In Matthew’s version, Jesus tells the disciples, “If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you” (Matt. 17:20).

So how does a church become a place where nothing is impossible? How does a church move in the supernatural work of God? How does a pastor move into supernatural ministry? How do they together move towards desiring to live fully in the Kingdom of God and not be as concerned about the crowd reaction? How do they together do the work of God where people are supernaturally healed and delivered? How do they move to a place of power over demons where the glory of the Lord overshadows everything? Thus, begins the movement of me as pastor and the church I serve from natural works to supernatural ministry. Like the father, I honestly cry out, “I believe, help my unbelief!”

Successful Living in the Natural

At face value, there is a draw to wanting to encounter God in the supernatural. After all, who would choose to hang out with the disciples in the valley rather than being with Jesus on the mountain? Frank Billman, faculty mentor in supernatural ministry at United Theological Seminary, defines the supernatural manifestations (or the supernatural for short) as “times when God moves in our world and causes results that can be experienced by our human senses but not explained.”¹ The supernatural was the

¹ Frank H. Billman, *The Supernatural Thread in Methodism: Signs and Wonders Among Methodists Then and Now* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House Press, 2013), 1.

glory of God overshadowing the mountain and the demon being cast out of the boy.

Biblically that is where the action seems to be.

However, living in the natural is easier and involves less risk. It seems more “natural” to work in the natural. From the point of view of worldly success, there were crowds gathered around the disciples in the valley. Arguing with the scribes could be considered “spiritual work” by the disciples. Although the glory of God overshadowed the mountain, certainly God was providentially present in the valley as well.

The providence of God blesses each person with natural gifts and abilities. Speaking, teaching, singing, financial giving, caring, social work, community service, and outreach are some of the many natural gifts and abilities that people can be providentially given. An individual Christian or a church can do successful ministry with these natural, albeit God-given, gifts. Churches I have been a part of, both as a layperson and clergy, have been generally successful. I had personal success in my life, both in a secular profession and sacred work. I can see God’s handiwork in churches and my life. This is God’s grace. There is a strong allure to continue on this path of God’s grace since it has seemed to work so far!

Personal Success

My father never really attended church, but he was raised with a strong German work ethic. My father, with the support of my mother, demanded excellence in school. My brother and I did not want to disappoint. We both graduated as high school valedictorians and went to college on academic scholarships. I graduated summa cum laude from the University of Houston in Mechanical Engineering, receiving awards as the

top overall Engineering student, the graduating student of the year, and the outstanding student leader. God had blessed me with an academic gift and my parents raised me to be diligent in my work, making the most of the opportunities I was given. My college success could be attributed to me just doing the best I could with what God had given me.

Through hard work and the natural gifts God gave me, I was professionally successful. I worked in a Navy research laboratory while earning a graduate degree in Aerospace Engineering, summa cum laude, from the University of Texas. I then became a research engineer for a not-for-profit firm in San Antonio. My engineering projects were well received by clients and I professionally advanced. Within eight years I was a Senior Research Engineer with multiple engineering articles published and even a U.S. Patent. These successes were possible through hard work and God's providential grace.

When I was called by God into ordained ministry, the transition from engineering was guided by God's hand. I graduated Perkins School of Theology summa cum laude and received awards for homiletics, Bible scholarship, and student leadership. During seminary, the small church I pastored grew in attendance, built a family life center, and started the only full-time daycare ministry in the rural part of the county. There was successful ministry in the next church and in the church after that. I was recently appointed to a declining UM church where my default would be to continue my pattern of hard work that would hopefully lead to some success there as well.

Of course, there were ups and downs of life and ministry during these times. However, the driving point of this overview is that in many ways, properly applying God-given gifts and abilities can lead to success. One does not even have to give God any glory by taking credit for one's own hard work and talents. However, I give thanks to

God for what God has given me; I strive to use my talents and not bury them in the ground (Matt. 25:14-30); and I try to be obedient to God's law of love and live out the faith that I have. This is all well and good, but is there more?

Church and Community Success in McKinney

Churches and communities can also be very successful through diligent application of natural gifts and abilities. When I started this DMin, I was serving as the senior associate pastor of FUMC-McKinney located in the heart of downtown McKinney, Texas. My primary responsibility was to lead the Wellspring Contemporary services. In the twelve years I served there, the Wellspring community grew from one service time with around 130 in attendance to three service times with a combined attendance of over 350.

FUMC-McKinney is one of the most successful historic county seat Methodist churches in the country^{2,3} and the City of McKinney is known as one of the best places in the country to live⁴. The city and the church in many ways grew side-by-side. McKinney was first settled in 1841 and was incorporated in 1848.⁵ FUMC-McKinney was founded shortly thereafter in 1851.⁶ Figure 1 shows the growth of the city and church membership

² Len Wilson, "Top 25 Fastest Growing Large United Methodist Churches: 2015 Edition," accessed November 11, 2017, <http://lenwilson.us/top-25-fastest-growing-large-umc-2015/>.

³ Len Wilson, "Top 25 Fastest Growing Large United Methodist Churches: 2016 Edition," accessed November 11, 2017, <http://lenwilson.us/top-25-fastest-growing-large-umc-2016/>.

⁴ "Best Places to Live in 2014," Money. Last modified September 19, 2014. Accessed November 7, 2017, <http://time.com/money/collection-post/3312309/mckinney-texas-best-places-to-live/>.

⁵ "McKinney's History," McKinney Texas (official website), accessed November 4, 2017, <https://www.mckinneytexas.org/122/History/>.

⁶ Walter N. Vernon, *Methodism Moves Across North Texas* (Dallas, TX: The Historical Society, North Texas Conference, The Methodist Church, 1967), 75.

from 1880 to the present. McKinney, located around thirty miles north-northeast of Dallas, began to experience the population growth of the DFW Metroplex starting around 1990. As the city population grew, so did membership in the church.

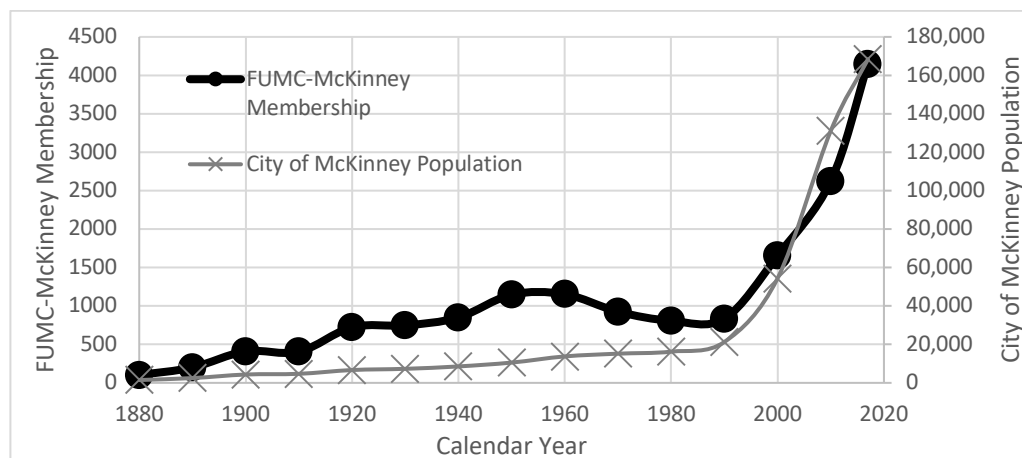


Figure 1. FUMC-McKinney Membership⁷ and City of McKinney Population^{8,9,10}

The historic architecture of FUMC-McKinney contributes to the community, but the members of the church have historically contributed much more. Prior to the sesquicentennial celebration of the church in 2001, a committee was formed to obtain an oral history of the church. These unpublished interviews of forty-two long-time members, many of whom have passed away, comprise over 175 type-written pages.¹¹ One of the

⁷ From respective years of the *Minutes Annual Conference M.E. South* (1850-1887) or the *North Texas Annual Conference Journal* (1940-2017).

⁸ "Texas Almanac: City Population History from 1850-2000," TexasAlmanac.com, accessed November 9, 2017, <https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/CityPopHist%20web.pdf>.

⁹ "McKinney, Texas Population: Census 2010 and 2000 Interactive Map, Demographics," CensusViewer.com, accessed November 9, 2017, <http://censusviewer.com/city/TX/McKinney/>.

¹⁰ "Demographics, Census, and Reports," McKinney Texas (official website), accessed November 9, 2017, <https://www.mckinneytexas.org/294/Demographics-Census-Reports/>.

¹¹ Jan DeLisle, et al., ed., *150th Anniversary Oral History Project* (McKinney, TX: unpublished archives of First United Methodist Church of McKinney, 2001).

consistent themes of those interviewed was the number of prominent citizens who attended FUMC-McKinney. One member said, “At one time, six of the seven members of city council were members of the church.” Another, who himself was a mayor, said, “We have had mayors, presidents of public school boards, members of school boards, members of the city council, and just people out there leading, being part of the town.” Also of note, the pastor in McKinney wrote in 1861 that 120 joined the church that year and “we have established a literary and theological society for improvement of local preachers and exhorters.”¹² Early on there was an emphasis on intellectual growth and education.

The growth of FUMC-McKinney is not simply due to the growth of the city. The four other United Methodist Churches in McKinney have had different recent histories: one has had worship attendance drop by more than half since 2010, two have closed completely, and the fourth is a very small congregation. The only thriving United Methodist Church in McKinney is the historic First United Methodist Church! Good decisions, strong pastors, significant leaders, and hard work have all helped FUMC-McKinney be successful.

As with many United Methodist Churches, discipleship ministries had mixed results. On the down side, adult Sunday School attendance lagged far behind the growth in worship attendance (only 16% growth from 2010 and 2017 compared to worship attendance growth of 60%). On the positive side, FUMC-McKinney has very active classes in the *Disciple* series. Regarding this project, it was a simple matter to incorporate a modified version of DBS and offer a first draft of W&P as part of the other *Disciple*

¹² Macum Phelan, *A History of Early Methodism in Texas: 1817-1866* (Nashville, TN: Cokesbury Press, 1924), 463.

courses. This provides anecdotal evidence for an open avenue to introduce W&P into a congregation that is already offering the *Disciple* series for group Bible studies.

Church and Community Success in Irving

Before the last year of this DMin process, right before I was to implement the project, I was moved to a new appointment as senior pastor of FUMC-Irving. Irving, Texas is located in the middle of the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex with downtown Fort Worth to the west and downtown Dallas to the east. Irving is also situated between the two major airports serving DFW. Irving was founded in 1903 and officially incorporated as a city in 1914.¹³ The city was founded on the ideal railroad route between Fort Worth and Dallas. The Trinity Railroad with service between Fort Worth and Dallas continues to run through the heart of Irving and within blocks of FUMC-Irving.

As with McKinney, the city of Irving and FUMC-Irving shared a similar growth history, at least for a number of years. Although not the first Methodist church in the current incorporated area of Irving, FUMC-Irving, founded in 1908¹⁴, is more closely linked to the historic downtown area of Irving. Figure 2 shows the growth of Irving and church membership from 1900 to the present. As Dallas grew following World War II, the close suburb of Irving began to grow as well. The growth in the airline industry helped as Irving was located near Love Field, the large Dallas area airport. Later, Irving's location was even closer to DFW Airport, which opened in 1973. Through the time period from post-World War II to around 1980, as the city population grew, so did membership in the church. There was a dip in growth for a few years starting around

¹³ "History of the City of Irving," Irving Texas (official website), accessed December 6, 2019, <https://www.cityofirving.org/1549/History/>.

¹⁴ Vernon, *Methodism Moves*, 388.

1960. This is attributed to a community and church controversy surrounding an Irving school system superintendent. Many members left and joined Kirkwood United Methodist Church, which was founded out of FUMC-Irving in 1952.

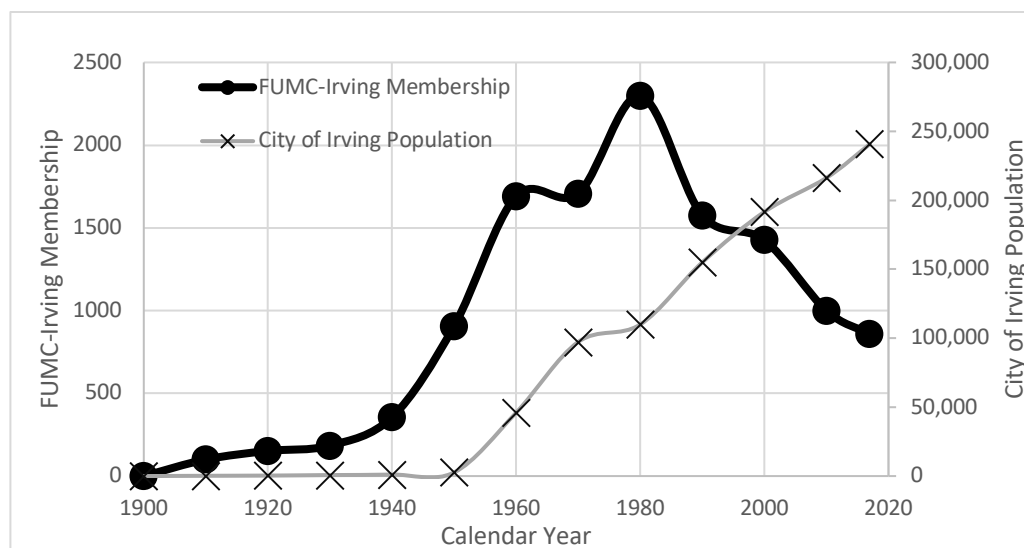


Figure 2. FUMC-Irving Membership¹⁵ and City of Irving Population¹⁶

There was a major shift in the church growth trend starting around 1980. Although the City of Irving continued to grow, FUMC-Irving began a membership decline that has continued. This decline in United Methodist membership occurred in all of the larger churches in Irving. Kirkwood UMC, mentioned earlier, reached a peak membership around 1969 of over 1000 members¹⁷ but currently has a membership of only 120. Plymouth Park UMC had a peak membership of over 1,700 in 1994 but has

¹⁵ From respective years of the *North Texas Annual Conference Journal* (1910-2018).

¹⁶ "Texas Almanac: City Population History from 1850-2000," TexasAlmanac.com, accessed 1, 2019, <https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/CityPopHist%20web.pdf>.

¹⁷ North Texas Conference History Project, *Blest Be Our Ties: A History of the North Texas Conference United Methodist Church 1960-2000*. (Dallas, TX: The North Texas Conference Commission on Archives and History, 2000), 205.

declined since.¹⁸ Other United Methodist Churches in Irving are smaller. However, there is one major exception, Korean Central UMC, which is located in Irving since 1994. They have a current membership of over 1,500 and a worship attendance of over 2,100 that dwarfs all other Methodist churches in Irving. This is telling of the Irving community that has shifted in demographics. According to the most recent U.S. census results, almost twenty percent of the population of Irving is of Asian origin and over forty percent are Latino/a.¹⁹ This change in demographics has significantly affected the church membership and attendance of the predominantly Anglo United Methodist Churches such as FUMC-Irving.

Even though it has declined in membership and attendance since the 1980's, FUMC-Irving remains one of the prominent churches in Irving. The congregation desires to grow and has hopes for a bright future. Their vision is to be "a bright beacon of God's love to Irving and beyond." In anticipation, they built a new sanctuary that was completed in 2003. However, membership and attendance continued to decline defying the "build it and they will come" hope.

As another indicator of hope, mission work remains very important to FUMC-Irving. There have been ongoing mission trips to Guatemala for the last five years. These mission trips included helping to construct a local church building as well as conducting Vacation Bible School for that church. Locally, FUMC-Irving is very active with the at-risk and homeless populations. Sack lunches are served to this population Monday through Friday. They support a weekly ministry called Many Helping Hands that serves

¹⁸ *Blest Be Our Ties*, 204.

¹⁹ United States Census Bureau, "Quick Facts: Irving City, Texas," accessed December 9, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/irvingcitytexas>.

an evening meal and provides essentials to those in need. They host families with children on a quarterly basis by providing dinner and place to sleep for an entire week. Although the congregation struggles to become more diverse in Sunday morning worship, they reach out with a loving heart to their surrounding diverse community.

Regarding discipleship ministries, FUMC-Irving has a very active Sunday School program with a majority of the adults, youth, and children attending one of the classes. With the aging population, there is a large class for adults upwards of eighty years old and the largest class is made up mostly of retirees. There are smaller classes for young adults, youth, and children, the demographics that need the most growth. There are only a few weekday or weeknight Bible studies. However, there was a large push for the *Disciple* series in the late 1990's and early 2000's. The associate pastor that served during this time said that well over four hundred members took at least one of the studies in the *Disciple* series. None of the *Disciple* series Bible studies have been offered in more than five years. However, members were quick to sign up for this DMin project providing anecdotal evidence that even dormant *Disciple* programs can be revived with W&P.

In different ways than with FUMC-McKinney, there is still much to be thankful to God for regarding FUMC-Irving. Committed members of FUMC-Irving throughout the years have resulted in a church that continues to do effective ministry in the community and the world. However, what can be done to revive a declining church? When I arrived at FUMC-Irving, the most common question asked of me was, "What are you going to do help grow our church?" Do they simply need a hard-working pastor with a track record of success? What should be the role of the Holy Spirit? What more is needed?

Glimpses of the Supernatural

Occasional encounters with the supernatural power of God can awaken the idea that more in God is possible. Supernatural encounters are more than just providential grace or faithful service to God's kingdom in the church. Signs and wonders point to the reality of the supernatural in my life and the life of the church. The demonized boy's father pleaded for this supernatural encounter: "If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us" (Mark 9:22). Are we just to wait for supernatural encounters to happen or are we to actively pursue the supernatural works of God? Nazarene revivalist Dr. Rob McCorkle proposes we are to have "a lifestyle of intimacy with Christ where we learn to activate the Word like Him and to encourage us to live naturally in the supernatural."²⁰

Salvation as Supernatural

The one area of supernatural ministry that is welcomed by churches is the saving grace of Jesus Christ. As the Scripture says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Whether salvation is classified by theologians as a miracle is not important; salvation is clearly a supernatural move of God because there is no human effort that can result in being saved by grace through faith. R. T. Kendall says, "God wants His Word to be magnified above signs and wonders. Salvation is more important than miracles. ... We are not saved by signs and wonders but by the gospel."²¹

²⁰ Rob McCorkle. *Bridging the Great Divide: Reuniting Word and Spirit* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2015), Kindle Locations 188-189.

²¹ R.T. Kendall, *The Anointing: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2003), 154.

God's supernatural work of salvation in my life traces at least back through my grandmother and the wife of an Assembly of God pastor. After my mother's parents married, they moved into a row house in Philadelphia. My grandmother had Russian-born parents and was taught neither how to operate an American oven nor anything about Jesus. The pastor's wife befriended my grandmother and helped her with both. My grandmother accepted Christ while in her thirties and was on fire for Jesus the rest of her life. In turn, she witnessed to her sisters and brother, raised her three girls (my mother included) in the Christian faith, and led her own mother to Christ. There are at least seventy-two members of our family who believe in Christ because of my grandmother!

As a young boy in Miami, Florida, I attended an Assembly of God church with my grandmother, my mother, and my brother. Around the age of five, I responded to a guest preacher and raised my hand to accept Jesus as my savior. I had a "strange warming of the heart" (like John Wesley). At home, I asked my mom about my experience and she explained salvation in Christ to me. In that conversation, I received an assurance of faith that has been with me my entire life. Being saved by Jesus is truly the most powerful supernatural experience.

Churches I have served have had persons come to Christ as pre-teens during the Confirmation process, as teenagers in youth ministry, and as adult confessions of faith. This is true even in the declining membership church of FUMC-Irving. Persons coming to faith in Jesus Christ through the life of the church is God's supernatural work in action! The supernatural work of Jesus Christ forgives sin, gives new life, conquers death, and grants eternal life. This amazing gift from God should never be taken for

granted or underestimated as the power of God. But the biblical stories of the transfiguration and demonized boy reveal there is more.

Signs and Wonders

Those of us in the Methodist tradition are taught that God's love extends to all, which we call "prevenient grace." When a person is "saved by grace through faith" (Eph. 2:8) in Jesus Christ, we call that "justifying grace." Being saved, however, is not the end of the Christian journey. Through the continuing work of the Holy Spirit, a person grows in holiness and love through the power of the Holy Spirit, which we call "sanctifying grace." Methodists, especially, know that there is more to the Christian life than salvation that comes through faith.

Sanctifying grace, however, has become less than what was fully intended by the Holy Spirit driven life in a Christian. Sanctifying grace has been unnecessarily split in two: sanctification that results in purity in life and sanctification that is revealed in power through supernatural activity. In his work to revive the Nazarene denomination, Dr. McCorkle decries this divorce of purity and power: "We've generally accepted that sanctification purifies the heart from the propensity of sin; yet we have been cautious, even skeptical, of talking about the power of the Spirit being manifested by spiritual gifts through a sanctified individual."²² The fullness of sanctifying grace should result in (using McCorkle's phrasing) "purity and power—purity as holiness of heart and life (as seen in the Word) and power as referring to the activity of the Spirit through supernatural

²² McCorkle, *Bridging*, Kindle Locations 522-526.

functions (as seen in the lifestyle of Jesus).”²³ In many United Methodist Churches, including all the churches I have served, Word and purity are emphasized to the almost complete exclusion of the supernatural signs and wonders of the Holy Spirit.

The father of the demonized boy must have heard of the supernatural power in Jesus as he was willing to ask for supernatural healing. However, the father was more certain of the natural than the supernatural so his words to Jesus were qualified: “If you can ...” and “I believe; help my unbelief.” Personally, I have had the occasional encounter with the supernatural, so I know the possibility (“I believe”). Yet I also can lack a surety in the supernatural, so I too can qualify my statements with “If you can ...” and “help my unbelief.”

As a young boy I heard speaking in tongues at the Assembly of God church we attended, but I always thought those (mostly) elderly ladies were speaking Hebrew. When we moved to a different city when I was ten, my mother brought us to the United Methodist Church that was within walking distance of home. At that church I had a few experiences at the United Methodist Youth Fellowship (UMYF) summer camps where I felt a deepening relationship with God. I also occasionally felt God speak to me as I read *The Living Bible*²⁴ my mother had given me when I was nine years old. My first significant encounters with supernatural signs and wonders, however, occurred in college.

I became involved as a freshman in Chi Alpha, the Assembly of God student ministry. One evening, I went with some of the Chi Alpha group to an area of Houston

²³ McCorkle, *Bridging*, Kindle Locations 522-526.

²⁴ *The Living Bible: Paraphrased* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1971).

notorious for the gay and lesbian community of bars, tattoo parlors, and sex shops. I had never seen such blatantly open sin in my life! We stopped at a ministry center that offered free coffee to people on drug highs. A young man walking down the street grabbed me and said something I could not understand. When I looked him in the eye, I saw a demon. I cannot describe what I saw or explain how I knew, but I was face-to-face with a demonized man. I did not know what to do and the man moved on, but I never again doubted the validity of those biblical passages regarding the demonic.

The next semester, while attending church with one of my Chi Alpha friends, I went forward at the end of the service and received the gift of speaking in tongues. I remember this as a powerful experience, although I had two opposing thoughts occur simultaneously. One thought was that I was experiencing something that was bringing me closer to God. The second thought was that I was speaking gibberish and this was a psychological reaction to the power of suggestion. I believe in the validity of speaking in tongues, but I also understand the hesitancy drawn from our skeptical world that others may feel regarding this supernatural gift.

I have also experienced supernatural answers to prayer. When I was finishing my master's degree in Aerospace Engineering at the University of Texas, I interviewed at a company in San Antonio, Texas. I was told I was their first interview for the position and that they needed to interview at least two others, which would take at least a couple of months. One week later on a Monday night, God supernaturally gave me the words to a prayer: "If I get this job in San Antonio I will be an engineer, but if not then I will switch career paths." I reluctantly prayed that prayer, afraid of what God's answer would be.

The very next morning I received a phone call with a job offer. The company would cancel the other interviews if I accepted. God answered the prayer in a matter of hours!

Soon after I moved to San Antonio, I met some friends from Austin for dinner at a restaurant in Kerrville before helping with a *Walk to Emmaus*²⁵ retreat that night. A group of folks from San Antonio, who were also helping with the retreat, happened to be at the same restaurant. When I walked up to their table to introduce myself and tell them I had recently moved to San Antonio, the Holy Spirit said to this young woman, “You will marry him.” Within a month, Jana and I started dating and we married six months later. God’s power in our lives was real!

Years later at a healing retreat led by renowned healing evangelist Francis MacNutt, Jana, who was leading music for the retreat, received the gift of tongues and a prophecy about her music ministry. During a worship service, MacNutt placed a hand on me and I found myself on the ground resting in the presence of God²⁶. We left the retreat excited about supernatural healing ministry. Shortly thereafter, a woman in a DBS study I was leading was prayed for and received supernatural healing from severe headaches.

After my call to ministry, I also saw occasional moments of God’s supernatural power appearing in the church. In my first church, a man had a dream about the church altar table being moved off the chancel area onto the floor. The next day, a Sunday, he saw that the altar table had indeed been moved to the floor to make room for the Praise Team. That dream completely altered the reception of the church to the sacred altar table being moved!

²⁵ Information about this three-day spiritual retreat sponsored by Upper Room Ministries can be found at <http://emmaus.upperroom.org/about>.

²⁶ Some may also call this “slain in the Spirit.”

However, these moments of the supernatural power of God breaking through were few and far between. That is until I started to pursue this DMin in the supernatural. In the past couple of years, there have been more regular occurrences of signs and wonders. At FUMC-McKinney, in response to God speaking to her during worship, one woman started a Bible study centered around encountering the Scriptures through art. Right before the start-up, a neighbor, without any knowledge of the intent of the Bible study, gave her a large amount of art supplies. In another case, a single mother was helped because a member of the church heard God's voice say, "Go to talk to her!" In the first few months of my appointment at FUMC-Irving, one woman received supernatural healing of her foot that had been causing her pain for more than two years. Another member received immediate supernatural healing from a leg condition that would normally have taken many months to heal.

Along the lines of supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, FUMC-Irving has an historical basis in revival. In 1952, Mrs. W.L. Noah wrote an account of the beginning of FUMC-Irving. "Our church began in a brush arbor. The Reverend M.H. Read, pastor of the Grand Prairie Methodist church held a revival, and at the close of this revival 14 of us joined the church. We had no place to hold services, but the school board very graciously gave us permission to use the school building."²⁷ At the time when brush arbor and camp meeting revivals were on the wane, a revival moved the hearts of fourteen people (twelve adults and two children according to the church membership rolls) to start a Methodist

²⁷ "First United Methodist Church Irving Over the Years," First United Methodist Church of Irving (official website), accessed November 4, 2019, <http://www.fumcirving.org/fumc-irving-church-history>.

Church. Many years later, another revival moved the heart of a church member who was only a youth at the time. This member writes in a private email correspondence:

The revival that I remember my conversion occurred was in the summer of either 1981 or 82. If my memory serves me. I remember that the specific night had a very spiritual feel. You could sense the presence of what I know now as the Holy Spirit. The music and singing were almost hypnotic. The lighting under the arbor was not bright and I remember the aroma of the cut lumber and branches. I remember how the spirit moved me and the night I remember taking Jesus as my savior.

This member also writes that this may have been the church's last brush arbor revival.

However, these glimpses of the supernatural are present in the history of this church.

More than likely there are glimpses of the supernatural present in most churches (at least there is hope that there is). These glimpses can provide a basis for fanning into flame the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that may just be lying dormant in the church.

Making it Natural to Live in the Supernatural

The Call to Supernatural Ministry

Pursuing this DMin in the supernatural was, itself, a supernatural experience. At the 2017 North Texas Annual Conference, Dr. David Watson, academic dean of United Theological Seminary, gave a luncheon presentation on the topic of the "Next Methodism." Dr. Watson hoped that through the present crisis of a potential United Methodist Church division, a "Next Methodism" would emerge that would (1) feed people's spiritual and physical hunger, (2) be Spirit-filled, (3) be rooted in Scripture, and

(4) be Wesleyan in its deep passion for evangelism and social holiness.²⁸ My spirit resonated with a heartfelt, “Yes!” Regardless of my denomination’s future, I want to be a part of a local church that has these four marks. Some would argue that churches I served already had at least three of these marks. But what about being Spirit-filled? I felt that as a clarion call to reunite the supernatural signs and wonders back into the traditional United Methodist Church.

Based upon Dr. Watson’s luncheon talk, I visited United Theological Seminary and used the opportunity to also make the short journey to the Aldersgate Renewal Conference in Kentucky. While at the conference, I participated in a soaking prayer event where I experienced the voice of God speaking! I was being called to rewrite *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study* to include an emphasis towards the work of the Holy Spirit. I became excited as God started to flood me with ideas about a study to be called, “Word and Power.”

In a draft run of this study conducted at FUMC-McKinney in the 2017-18 school year, participants, guided by the “Word and Power” curriculum, shared how God had spoken to them in dreams, some experienced hearing the voice of God, and others received words of knowledge about another participant. In one class session, there was a vision shared of God lifting a large stone off a class member. The next week this woman shared how she had lost a job she hated two days before that vision and that the vision allowed her to see this as a burden lifted. This trial of the draft W&P curriculum indicated that supernatural understanding, practice, and ministry was possible at a United

²⁸ David Watson, “Four Marks of the Next Methodism,” *David F. Watson: Musings and Whatnot*, June 13, 2017, accessed December 6, 2017, <https://davidfwatson.me/2017/06/13/four-marks-of-the-next-methodism/>.

Methodist Church that was not currently operating in the supernatural works of the Holy Spirit!

Obstacles to the Supernatural

The desire for the Spirit-filled church Dr. Watson spoke of and the call to create “Word and Power” seemed to lay the groundwork for seeking the supernatural in my life and the life of the church. However, the pride of natural success, both in my life and the church, is the enemy of the supernatural. If things can go well in the comfortable realm of the natural, why mess them up with the signs and wonders of God? Following Jesus’ resurrection, the disciples were criticized for turning the world upside down (Acts 17:6).

When I was going through the process leading to full ordination, I had little difficulty with the paperwork or the interviews. I thought I spoke passionately and clearly about God’s hand in my calling and my work in the church. Yet one of the members of the Board of Ordained Ministry cautioned, “There seems to be a lot of ‘Doug’ in your ministry.” Kendall warns that a pastor can fall into the trap of thinking, “[God] gave me certain abilities when He made me and called me into the ministry. By study and hard work I can improve upon these gifts—*without* a fresh anointing that comes *only* from continued intimacy with God.”²⁹

In the church, much can be accomplished with the natural abilities of the collective body. Revivalist and Bethel Senior Pastor Bill Johnson writes, “Most of the goals of the modern Church can be accomplished without God. All we need is people, money, and a common objective. Determination can achieve great things. But success is

²⁹ Kendall, *Anointing*, 44.

not necessarily a sign that the goal was from God. Little exists in church life to ensure that we are being directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit.”³⁰ Dr. Randy Clark, founder of Global Awakening, concurs: “We may be well trained to do ‘church work,’ run committees, preach or teach, administrate and counsel, all through our education. But that is not the same as the ability to heal the sick, cast out demons, raise the dead and preach with an anointing that breaks down hard hearts with such conviction that people are brought to Jesus.”³¹

Introducing the Supernatural into a United Methodist Church

If the church is growing, has adequate Bible studies for growing disciples, and is making a difference in the community, why risk introducing a “new” element of God? Why should I, as a “successful” pastor, risk my reputation and the success of the church to pursue a supernatural ministry that even the majority of the disciples of Jesus found impossible with the demonized boy? Why not answer the question asked of me when I started at FUMC-Irving by focusing on what I can do through hard work, good decisions, and natural leadership?

However, what if Tozer’s statement is true? “If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 per cent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95

³⁰ Bill Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth: A Practical Guide to a Life of Miracles* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2013), 50.

³¹ Randy Clark, *There is More! The Secret to Experiencing God’s Power to Change Your Life* (Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2013), 41-42.

per cent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference.”³² If the success of a church is built solely on the hard work of the people acting on their God-given gifts and abilities then change is needed. McCorkle states it this way: “There is a difference between working for God and working from Him.”³³

The heart of this DMin project is introducing the supernatural into the ministry of a United Methodist church where there seems to be no obvious need for it. Both FUMC-McKinney and FUMC-Irving, like many United Methodist churches, are very familiar and comfortable with the *Disciple* series. Introducing a new study along the lines of DBS should not create excessive tension in the church. The driving point of W&P is to reunite purity and power, Word and Spirit, in a small group setting. W&P provides a way to increase supernatural understanding, practice, and ministry in participants using a non-threatening format. W&P can begin the process of opening a small group of people to the supernatural work of God in preparation for a larger work of God in the broader church.

Conclusion

Hard work that takes advantage of God-given abilities and gifts can result in personal success and successful communities and churches. This type of success can result in wonderful things for which God can be thanked. Personally, I have much to be thankful for in this regard as I have enjoyed career success both as an engineer and as a pastor. The church I served when I started this DMin process, FUMC-McKinney, has much to be thankful for in how faithful members over the years have made the church

³² Mark Woods, “AW Tozer: 10 Quotes from a 20th Century Prophet,” *Christian Today*, March 31, 2016. Accessed November 24, 2017, <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/aw-tozer-10-quotes-from-a-20th-century-prophet/83048.htm>.

³³ McCorkle. *Bridging*, Kindle Locations 270-272.

one of the fastest growing United Methodist churches. Although in a long-term decline, my current church, FUMC-Irving, also has much to be thankful for as they continue to serve a community in transition and continue to move into their future. Is there more?

The success described seems to live at the bottom of the mountain with the disciples who were unable to help a demonized boy. This success is in the natural and not overshadowed by the glory of God experienced by the three disciples on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured. Does the church have the courage of the father of the boy to ask Jesus for a display of the supernatural? Or would the church rather stay in the comfort zone of continual study and safe ministry? More personally, do I, as a pastor, have the courage to have the faith to step into supernatural ministry? Jesus said it only took faith the size of a mustard seed to move mountains (Matt. 17:20).

Kendall describes a leader who relies on his/her old ways and previous calling by God as a “has-been.” He warns, “A has-been in God’s sight ... thrives with their natural skills, grace-gifts, strong personality and influential platform, and leads many people.”³⁴ There is safety in being a has-been, and, yes, even success. But there is available a fresh calling by God to a new anointing of the Holy Spirit. Regarding the supernatural, may we at least take the first step of saying, “I believe; help my unbelief!” Let us risk natural success to truly encounter the power of God in the supernatural. May FUMC-McKinney, FUMC-Irving and many other churches feed people’s spiritual and physical hunger, be rooted in Scripture, have a deep passion for evangelism and social holiness, and truly be Spirit-filled with understanding, practice, and ministry in the supernatural.

³⁴ Kendall, *Anointing*, 57.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

¹Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

²We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, ³remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴For we know, brothers [and sisters]¹ loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.⁹ For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

When I first began to consider the DMin program at United Theological Seminary, the idea of pursuing study on the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit was exciting. I visited Dayton, Ohio, in the summer prior to enrolling to learn about the DMin

¹ The Greek word, *adelphoi*, is translated herein as “brothers [and sisters]” (unlike in the ESV translation) where this is implied by the context. Regarding this inclusive translation, biblical scholar Eugene Boring states, “The translation ‘brothers and sisters’ is ... not merely accommodation to contemporary sensitivities, but actually a proper translation of the contextual meaning.” See M. Eugene Boring, *I and II Thessalonians: A Commentary*, ed. C. Clifton Black, M. Eugene Boring, and John T. Carroll, The New Testament Library Series (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 58.

program and to work through some logistics. I timed this visit so that I could also attend the Aldersgate Renewal Ministry Conference in Lexington, Kentucky. While at the conference, I participated in a soaking prayer experience. During this time of deep prayer, God spoke to me about updating the *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study* curriculum to more emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit. The title God gave me was “Word and Power.”

The high importance of Scripture is emphasized in many places. For instance, Jesus read from Scripture (Luke 4:16-21), often quoted passages from the Hebrew Scriptures, and even used Scripture in his response to the devil’s temptations. One of these responses is: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (cf. Matt. 4:4 and Deut. 8:3). Paul reminds Timothy: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The power of God is also emphasized frequently through the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, upon his ascension, told the disciples not to begin their ministry until “You receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). But where are “word and power” used together?

Jesus refers to the uniting of word and power in his discussion with some Sadducees over the question of whether there was a resurrection. After they tried to trap Jesus with a question about marriage in heaven, Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matt. 22:9). In this case,

the Sadducees were missing out on both. They did not understand the Word of God and they did not understand the power of God displayed in resurrection.

Paul refers to word and power in his reminder to the church in Corinth: “My speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” (1 Cor. 2:4-5). However, in this passage, he is downplaying the rhetoric nature of his speech to emphasize the power of God in their becoming disciples. The message of his words, however, was the gospel. “For Christ [sent] me ... to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:17-8).

In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul gives thanks “because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thess. 1:5). Here, the word of the gospel is emphasized in that it not only came to the church of Thessalonica but came to them with power. The word is the good news of God’s redemption of humanity through the saving work of Jesus Christ, as contained in the Old and New Testaments. Yet this word is effective in that it is demonstrated through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us and our churches. Because both word and power were used in a positive sense, the thanksgiving pericope surrounding this passage (1:1-10) is the focus of this scriptural study.

The initial reason in studying this passage was the dual emphasis on word and power. Upon further examination, the surprising result is the greater emphasis in this passage on the work of God through the Thessalonians’ imitation of Paul and his

missionary team and the Thessalonian church in turn being an example to others. The effectiveness of imitation and example personalizes the effect of word and power.

The Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit are external elements (which means they are super-natural) that exist outside the people, whether they be the preacher, teacher, evangelist, and missionary or their audience. However, Paul gives thanks for the individuals and groups that the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit works through. How Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy lived and acted in Thessalonica was essential to the message. The people of Thessalonica were taught the word, but also caught the message as they imitated the lives of the missionaries. They then became living examples of the gospel message to others in places like Macedonia and Achaia. How word and power manifested in the lives of the missionaries and the new converts in Thessalonica is paramount as will be shown in this discussion of 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10.

Background Information About Thessalonica

Thessalonica was the capital city of the Roman province of Macedonia. The city fortunately sided with the victorious Octavian (the adopted heir of Julius Caesar and later named Caesar Augustus) during the Roman civil war of 43 B.C. and was granted the status of a free Greek city.² Thessalonica possessed other economic advantages. From a maritime trade perspective, Thessalonica was situated near a naturally protected port on the northern coast of the Aegean Sea, the body of water lying between Greece and Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). In addition, Thessalonica was at the midpoint of the Egnatian Way, the major overland road connecting Rome in the west with Byzantium

² Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 5.

(modern day Istanbul) in the east.³ Thessalonica was therefore a major city for sea and land trade.

Religiously, Thessalonica was very diverse. Mount Olympus, where Zeus and the pantheon of Greek gods were supposed to live, was clearly visible from the upper streets of Thessalonica.⁴ Archaeological evidence shows devotion to Zeus, Apollo, Aphrodite, the goddess Nemesis, and other Greco-Roman gods and goddesses.⁵ The Anchor Bible Dictionary also describes archaeological remains of an active sanctuary complex to the Egyptian gods Isis and Serapis.⁶ Since Thessalonica was a patron city of Rome, stemming from it being a free city and provincial capital, Roman emperor worship was also present.⁷ Coinage from Thessalonica included images of Dionysus (the god of wine, madness, and sexual ecstasy), Cabirus,⁸ and Roman Emperors Julius Caesar and Octavian with reference to “god” or “son of god.”⁹ Karl Paul Donfried, lifelong scholar of First and Second Thessalonians, argues that the most important religious cult of Thessalonica was

³ Gordon D. Fee and Robert L. Hubbard, "1 and 2 Thessalonians," in *The Eerdmans Companion to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 681.

⁴ Howard F. Vos, *Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 677.

⁵ Holland L. Hendrix, "Thessalonica," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, vol. 6:Si-Z (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 525.

⁶ Hendrix, "Thessalonica," 523.

⁷ Abraham Smith, "The First Letter to the Thessalonians," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck, vol. XI (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 677.

⁸ Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 4-5.

⁹ Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 6.

the mysterious cult of Cabirus.¹⁰ Cabirus was the tutelary deity of the city who promoted fertility and protected sailors.¹¹ As the tutelary deity, all citizens were to pay homage to this god-like figure who protected the city and enabled economic prosperity.

While in Thessalonica, Paul spent three Sabbath days in a synagogue (Acts 17:2), was run out of town by jealous Jews who were able to form a mob (17:5), and was even run out of the next town of Berea by Jews from Thessalonica (17:11). Thus, in addition to the many gods worshiped in Thessalonica, there were also Jews who worshiped the one true God, although they had not yet heard of Jesus before Paul's arrival. The Jews of Thessalonica were seemingly not very open to the gospel and Luke characterizes them by comparing them to the Jews of Berea who were "more noble than those in Thessalonica" (Acts 17:11).

Thessalonica fits into the pattern of a successful city with successful religion with no felt need for this one true God. Yet, some people in Thessalonica responded to the Gospel message. As a missionary, Paul was hard-working and talented. However, further study of this passage indicates that it was not the natural gifts of Paul that created the church of the Thessalonians. Instead, it was the understanding, practice, and ministry of Paul in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that resulted in transformed lives in Thessalonica.

¹⁰ Karl Paul Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 25.

¹¹ Donfried, *Thessalonica*, 26.

Paul and the Thessalonian Church

Paul in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9)

Paul, Silas, and Timothy, most likely without Luke¹², traveled along the Egnatian Way from Philippi to found a church in Thessalonica. This founding is also referred to in our focus passage (1 Thess. 1:4-10). This first visit to Thessalonica occurred around A.D. 49-50,¹³. However, Thessalonian scholar Donfried makes an argument that Paul's visit could have occurred much earlier in his career, as early as A.D. 36.¹⁴

The narrative in Acts indicates that Paul and his companions preached three Sabbath days in the synagogue (17:2). How long after these first three weeks until Paul and Silas slipped away in the night to Berea is less clear. Gordon Fee, professor emeritus of New Testament Studies at Regent College, argues for a longer than three week stay based upon evidence from 1 and 2 Thessalonians including Paul's references to teaching them¹⁵ and the Christian maturity revealed in the letters. Fee states, "one should probably posit a stay of several weeks or months."¹⁶

The longer stay also fits into some of the themes of First Thessalonians. Paul reminds the Thessalonian church, "You know what kind of men we proved to be among

¹² F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, vol. 45, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), xxii. The pronoun "we" is used in Acts 16:11-18 indicating that Luke was with Paul, Silas and Timothy in Philippi. However, the pronoun "they" is used in the Thessalonica account of Acts 17:1-10 possibly indicating that Luke had stayed behind in Philippi when Paul, Silas, and Timothy left.

¹³ Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 6.

¹⁴ Donfried, *Thessalonica*, 75-76.

¹⁵ 2 Thessalonians 2:5, "Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?"

¹⁶ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 6.

you for your sake” (1:5), speaking to the character of the missionaries. Paul speaks to leading by example: “You became imitators of us and of the Lord” (1:6). People in other parts of Macedonia reported to Paul on his arrival “the kind of reception we had among you [Thessalonians]” (1:9). Paul reveals a high degree of mutual affection between the church and the missionaries (see 2:17-20). The missionaries “worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you” (2:9 and also 2 Thess. 3:8).¹⁷ In addition, Gary Shogren, professor of New Testament in Costa Rica and proponent of the continuation of spiritual gifts states, “From what may be gleaned from the Thessalonian letters, the depth of their doctrinal understanding seems well out proportion to a visit of only a few weeks.”¹⁸ Finally, Paul praises the church in Philippi: “Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again” (Phil. 4:16). A three week stay would not seem to allow for the character, actions, references, affection, labor, theological depth, and external support indicated by Paul in his letters.

From the narrative in Acts we learn that Paul and his companions spent three Sabbath days in “the synagogue of the Jews” (17:1) reasoning with them from Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ, crucified and risen (17:3). The result was that “some of them were persuaded” (17:4). The missionaries also spent time in conversations outside the Synagogue as “a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women” as well as a man named Jason were saved (17:4, 5).

As in many other places, opposition to the teaching of Christ arose, this time from some Jews. These Jews grabbed “certain lewd fellows of the baser sort” (Acts 17:5 KJV)

¹⁷ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 7.

¹⁸ Gary S. Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 21.

and went searching for Paul and the other missionaries. When they did not find them, they grabbed Jason and some other Christians and took them before the city leaders, called the “politarchs”¹⁹ (17:6). The mob shouted, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also!” (17:6). Jason and the others were accused of “acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus” (17:7). Although Jason and the rest were released after paying a fine, this disturbance was dangerous enough that “the brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea” (17:10).

Perkins School of Theology New Testament professor Abraham Smith comments that Paul’s message of Jesus as the true “benefactor and inaugurator of a new age” was a strong political affront to a city whose economic strength was the result of Rome’s benefactor status and who looked to Rome for tangible benefits.²⁰ Maybe this is the reason behind the Jewish-formed crowd’s accusation about Paul and his companions in Acts 17:6-8 that they were turning the world upside down by claiming another king other than Caesar. The church in Thessalonica would have posed a threat to the stability of the Roman city by challenging both the religious and economic order. This challenge to stability may be why Paul encouraged the Thessalonica church in this way: “For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord” (1 Thess. 3:8).²¹

¹⁹ The term “politarch” had not been found prior to the early twentieth century in any other writing of the time outside Acts 17:6, 8 leading many biblical scholars to question the historical accuracy of Luke. However, many archeological inscriptions have been subsequently found bearing this term with an impressive 40 percent (twenty-eight) discovered in Thessalonica. See Weima, *Thessalonians*, 8-9.

²⁰ Abraham Smith, “The First Letter to the Thessalonians,” in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck, vol. XI (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 677.

²¹ Smith, “The First Letter to the Thessalonians,” 682.

Overview of First Thessalonians

A chronology for the writing of First Thessalonians can be gleaned from the Acts accounts and evidence from within the letter. After the night escape from Thessalonica (Acts 17:10), Paul and Silas preach in the synagogue in Berea until once again disturbed by the same Jewish opposition from Thessalonica (17:13). Paul is then conducted to Athens with Silas and Timothy to join him soon (17:15 and 18:5). While in Athens, Paul sent Timothy on the journey from Athens to Thessalonica (referred to in 1 Thess. 3:1-5). Timothy brought good news to Paul (1 Thess. 3:6), prompting the writing of First Thessalonians. Assuming the visit to Thessalonica to be in A.D. 49-50, Earl J Richard, professor emeritus of New Testament at Loyola University in New Orleans, concludes First Thessalonians would have been composed no later than A.D. 50 or 51.²²

Without going into too much detail, it is also possible that First Thessalonians was written as early as the mid-40s. This is based upon the chronology presented by Paul in Galatians 1-2. From analysis of this Galatians text and additional information from Philippians and Second Corinthians, the Thessalonian letters were likely written from Athens and Corinth. The mid-40s date is arrived at since the Corinthian mission is dated from around A.D. 43-45.²³ Thessalonian scholar Donfried also argues for an earlier date and puts the writing of the letter as early as A.D. 43.²⁴ Of course, this earlier dating gives even more credibility to the idea that First Thessalonians was the first written text of the New Testament.

²² Earl J. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., vol. 11, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 4.

²³ See Richard, *Thessalonians*, 7-8, for a more detailed explanation.

²⁴ Donfried, *Thessalonica*, 76.

The letter to “the church of the Thessalonians” (1 Thess. 1:1 and 2 Thess. 1:1) is written to the house-churches of Thessalonica. At this time, of course, there were no church buildings and people were “breaking bread in their homes” (Acts 2:46). Paul and his companions had likely established some of these house-churches, while others were products of the growth of the church. Although the narrative in Acts indicates that there were some Jewish converts in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-4), the internal evidence from the Thessalonian letters indicates that the primary audience was Gentile converts.²⁵

The occasion of the writing of First Thessalonians can be internally deduced as the result of Timothy’s good news of the “faith and love” of the church of Thessalonica and that they were “standing fast in the Lord” (1 Thess. 3:6, 8). Thus, as New Testament professor at Perkins School of Theology Sze-kar Wan summarizes, the letter is a “friendly letter” that is “free of controversies over the law or polemics against opponents that characterize [Paul’s] later writings.”²⁶

Being the first epistle (ever!) to a church, Paul was inaugurating a new genre of literature with First Thessalonians. Orthodox Archpriest Lawrence Farley captures the importance of the form of this type of letter.

An apostle had pastoral responsibility to watch over the souls and attend to the eternal destinies of entire communities. Wherever he went, he bore them in his heart, lamenting their falls, praying for them, rejoicing over their progress as if each victory were his own. This sense of responsibility had never yet been seen by the world.²⁷

²⁵ Abraham Smith, “The First Letter to the Thessalonians,” in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck, vol. XI, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 682.

²⁶ Sze-kar Wan, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The New Interpreter's Bible One Volume Commentary*, ed. Beverly R. Gaventa and David Peteresen. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 857.

²⁷ Lawrence R. Farley, *Words of Fire: The Early Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians and the Galatians* (Chesterton, IN: Conciliar Press, 2010), 11.

Even a cursory reading of First Thessalonians will capture this pastoral responsibility that Paul had regarding his beloved children in the faith. Paul considered himself “like a nursing mother taking care of her own children” (1 Thess. 2:7).

As would be common in Greco-Roman letters of that time period, Paul writes a thanksgiving. Unique to First Thessalonians is the length of the thanksgiving (1:2-3:13), which can well be considered the main body.²⁸ The thanksgiving section includes a prayer (1:2-10), a defense of Paul’s caring attitude among the Thessalonians (2:1-12), encouragement under persecution (2:13-16), and Paul’s desire to return to Thessalonica (2:17-3:13).²⁹ In the remainder of the letter are exhortations towards purity in living (4:1-12), teachings on the second coming of Christ (4:13-5:11), final words on living in Christian community (5:12-22), and final words of blessing (5:23-28).³⁰

The tone of the letter is of warmth and concern. As described by Richard in the *Sacra Pagina* series, Paul is writing to a “cherished Macedonian community” a letter “devoted to its nurturing.”³¹ Paul shows concern for the persecution of the fledgling community that he himself had experienced while in Thessalonica. The surrounding culture itself is an enemy with regard to idol worship and sexual promiscuity. There also seems to be a potentially unhealthy obsession with Christ’s return that had caused some in the community to be concerned over the eternal fate of their fellow believers who have died. Some have even given up work in anticipation of Christ’s immediate return. All of these themes are at least hinted at in the thanksgiving prayer of 1:2-10. However, as shall

²⁸ Wan, “1 Thessalonians,” 857.

²⁹ Wan, “1 Thessalonians,” 858-859.

³⁰ Wan, “1 Thessalonians,” 860-862.

³¹ Richard, *Thessalonians*, 10.

be seen, the strongest emphasis in the thanksgiving prayer is on the gospel received by the Thessalonian church that was caught by imitation of Paul and in turn shown by example to others.

An Exegesis of 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

The Salutation (1 Thessalonians 1:1)

Although the first verse can be separated from the thanksgiving pericope of verses 2-10, there are points in this salutation that help with the exegesis of 2-10.³² The salutation in 1 Thessalonians 1:1 is identical to the one in 2 Thessalonians 1:1-2. The names “Paul” and “Silvanus” are the Roman versions of “Saul” and “Silas” as both were Roman citizens (Acts 16:37-38).³³ New Testament scholar Fee notes that it is extremely rare in Greco-Roman letters for the author to include companions in the salutation.³⁴ Paul does so in seven of his letters (1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians), although only in 1 and 2 Thessalonians are two companions included. There is a high frequency of “we,” “us,” and “our” in First Thessalonians indicating that the writing of the letter may have been collaborative between the three mentioned in the greeting, although the first person singular “I” is used much more

³² In this chapter, the “thanksgiving” of First Thessalonians is considered to be 1:2-10. However, there are other options due to the three uses of thanksgiving in the first three chapters (1:2, 2:1, and 3:13). Brite Divinity School New Testament professor M. Eugene Boring gives an excellent outline of the various options for defining the “thanksgiving” of First Thessalonians; see M. Eugene Boring, *I and II Thessalonians: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 55-56.

³³ Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 55.

³⁴ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 12.

frequently. For brevity, this chapter will refer to Paul as the author and to the group of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy as “the missionaries.”

Paul does not state in the salutation that he is an Apostle, as he does in all his other epistles (excluding Philippians where he self-identifies as a “slave” or “servant” of Jesus Christ). The extremely close nature of the relationship between the Thessalonica church and Paul as evidenced in the tone of the letter may have mitigated the need for Paul to have to resort to claiming his spiritual authority, even though he states later in the letter that “we could have made demands as apostles of Christ” (2:6). This familiarity is lovingly referred to by Paul: “So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us” (2:7-8).

Only in 1 and 2 Thessalonians does Paul address the recipients as the church of the people (i.e., “the church of the Thessalonians”) rather than the church of the place (e.g., “the church of God that is in Corinth” as in 1 and 2 Corinthians). The Greek word for church, *ekklēsia*, means “an assembly.” Fee points out that even though the oft-used meaning of *ekklēsia* as being “called out” is not correct³⁵, the Gentile Christians were in a community that were separate from the broader Greco-Roman culture. The Gentiles as Christians had roots in the Old Testament story and would have thought of themselves as “the gathered people of God.”³⁶ That Paul had a particular gathering of people in mind is apparent from his concluding statement, “Greet all the brothers [and sisters] with a holy

³⁵ Fee refers to the “called out” meaning of *ekklēsia* as a “myth” based upon the incorrect idea that this was a new biblical term made from the combination of *ék* (“out”) and *kaleō* (“called”). However, the word was in common use in Paul’s time and simply meant “an assembly” or “a gathering.” See footnote 22 in Fee, *Thessalonians*, 14.

³⁶ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 15.

kiss. I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers [and sisters]” (1 Thess. 5:26-27).³⁷ Again, the unique salutation to “the church of the Thessalonians” indicates a familiar relationship between author and recipients.

Also unique to 1 and 2 Thessalonians are Paul’s references to the church of the Thessalonians being “in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Donfried argues that Paul is using this phrase to make it clear that “this *ekklēsia* is different from other ‘assemblies’ in Thessalonica.”³⁸ These Thessalonians are “in God” and “in the Lord Jesus Christ” because they have turned away from idols to serve the living God (1 Thess. 1:9-10) and they are no longer like the pagans who do not know God (4:5).

The rest of chapter one of First Thessalonians builds on these ideas. Paul is writing to persons with whom he is familiar and for whom he has a deep fondness. He is also writing to a gathering of people who are unique because they are in God and the Lord Jesus Christ and not because of how the broader culture might see them. It is therefore not just perfunctory that Paul greets them with “grace to you and peace.” Grace is the outpouring of God’s gift towards the Christian that indeed makes them a gathered people in God. Paul’s love for the people resulted in his telling them of the gospel of Jesus Christ that is grace realized. Peace is a result from that gift of grace, where peace is a reality even amidst persecution from the surrounding society.

³⁷ Donfried, *Thessalonica*, 140, 143.

³⁸ Donfried, *Thessalonica*, 143.

We Give Thanks (1:2-10)

Abraham Malherbe, former distinguished professor of Yale Divinity School, argues that the Greek text suggests that the entire passage contained in verses 2-10 is one long sentence³⁹ although there are other options. Boring states that verses 2-5 are “clearly one sentence in Greek,” but whether verses 6-10 continue the thought as a compound sentence or are one or more independent sentences is unclear.⁴⁰ English translations divide the passage into varying number of sentences (for example, three in ESV, ASV, and NRSV, four in KJV, five in NIV, and seven in CEB)⁴¹. The primary verb in verses 2-5, from which everything flows, is *eucharistoumen* (“we give thanks”).

It is helpful to divide the pericope into two major sections: verses 2-5 give thanks for the work of God in the lives of the Thessalonian faithful and verses 6-10 give thanks for the response of the Thessalonians to God’s work. As Boring states, “The primary orientation point for all of Paul’s thought is the conviction that God has acted in Christ for the salvation of the world. The second orientation point is the human response; ... the believer’s grateful response to the saving act of God.”⁴² This pattern is exhibited in First Thessalonians with the first three chapters being God’s work in the lives of the Thessalonians through Paul and the last two chapters describing the response, that is “how you ought to live and to please God” (4:1). The act of God is evident in God’s choosing of the Thessalonian believers (1:4; 2:12) and the word of the gospel given to

³⁹ Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, vol. 32, The Anchor Bible (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000), 105.

⁴⁰ Boring, *Thessalonians*, 57.

⁴¹ English Standard Version, American Standard Version, New Revised Standard Version, King James Version, New International Version, and Common English Bible, respectively.

⁴² Boring, *Thessalonians*, 40.

them (2:2, 4, 8, 9, 13; 3:2) through the work of the missionaries (2:1-16) and later Timothy (3:1-4). The response they make is of receiving the word (1:6) and sharing the word (1:7-8). They are also to live accordingly in holiness (4:3-7), in love (4:9-10), in honest labor (4:11-12), in secure hope of Christ's return (4:13-18), in encouraging one another (5:11), and in prayer (5:17).

For both God's work and the response of the Thessalonian believers, Paul is able to give thanks. He is encouraged by Timothy's "good news of your faith and love" (3:6). Therefore, the missionaries are able to "give thanks to God always" (1:2) and to "thank God constantly" (2:13). This phrasing should not be glossed over in that thanksgiving in Scripture is always directed towards God. Boring emphatically states that "there is *no* 'thank you' on the horizontal level in the entire Bible, where the numerous expressions of thanks are always directed to God."⁴³ Paul models his constant thanksgiving and therefore can direct the Thessalonian believers through his example to "give thanks in all circumstances" (5:18).

Constant Prayer (1:2)

Addressing the Thessalonian believers, Paul states that the missionaries are "constantly mentioning you in our prayers" (1:2). As Shogren points out, "This prayer report is not polite religious jargon, such as Christians tend to fall into ('I'll be praying for you!'). Rather it is a realistic and powerful description of how they speak when they enter the presence of God."⁴⁴

⁴³ Boring, *Thessalonians*, 59.

⁴⁴ Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 56.

Paul is a man of prayer.⁴⁵ Immediately after his experience on the road to Damascus, Paul is found to be in prayer: “The Lord said to [Ananias], ‘Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight’” (Acts 9:11-12). Paul mentions prayer in each of his letters, with the notable exception of Galatians⁴⁶. Constant prayer is mentioned often in his letters (e.g., Rom. 12:12; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17; 2 Thess. 1:11; 1 Tim. 2:8; 2 Tim. 1:3).

Paul and his companions “worked night and day” to financially provide for themselves, all the while proclaiming the gospel (1 Thess. 2:9). Yet, they were also people of prayer. Richard, in the *Sacra Pagina* series, suggests that “constant” or “continually” refers to a state of mind rather than a time or place of prayer.⁴⁷ However appropriate Richard’s suggestion is that Paul had a state of mind for prayer, there would also be places and times of prayer that would be apparent evidence of Paul’s prayer life. How else could Paul in good conscience expect the Thessalonian church to imitate him (1:6) in prayer and be constant in their prayer (5:17) if they had not seen this type of prayer life in him?

⁴⁵ Gospel Coalition co-founder and New Testament professor D. A. Carson develops a whole paradigm of practical prayer using several of Paul’s prayers from his letters. Carson is in a good position to state, “Paul’s many references to his ‘prayers’ (e.g., Rom. 1:10; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:2) suggest that he set aside specific times for prayer—as apparently Jesus himself did (Luke 5:16).” See D.A. Carson, *Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 2.

⁴⁶ Prayer, however, is implied in Galatians. Paul is adamant to point out that he did not receive the gospel message from any person, “but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:12). He tells the Galatians he went to Jerusalem “because of a revelation” (2:2). It is hard to imagine that Paul received these revelations outside a life of prayer.

⁴⁷ Richard, *Thessalonians*, 112.

New Testament professor Jeffrey Weima suggests that Paul, having been a strict Pharisee, would be accustomed to the practice of daily prayer. He imagines that it would be a normal practice for Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy to “pray most earnestly night and day” (3:10), thanking God for the faithful lives evident in the Thessalonica church. He further states that the use of the adverbs “always” and “constantly” in 1:2, the present tense of “mentioning”, and the plural “prayers” all indicate a frequency of prayers.⁴⁸ Thus, we find that in modeling constant prayer, Paul is able to encourage the Thessalonian believers by word and example to “pray without ceasing” (5:17).

Work of Faith, Labor of Love, and Steadfastness of Hope (1:3)

After the expression “constantly mentioning you in our prayers” (1:2), Paul gives thanks to God by remembering the Thessalonian believers “work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness⁴⁹ of hope” (1:3). This is the first occurrence in literature of the Christian triad—faith, love, hope—and is repeated in 5:8 (see also Col. 1:4-5).⁵⁰ Paul changes the order in 1 Corinthians to emphasize love (1 Cor. 13:13). Boring goes so far as to say that the order is chronological for the Thessalonian believer: “their *faith* in God’s past actions ..., their present existence as mediators of God’s *love*, and their confident *hope* in God’s future.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ Weima, *Thessalonians*, 83.

⁴⁹ Other translations use “endurance” (NIV) or “patience” (KJV, ASV) instead of “steadfastness” (ESV, NRSV). In this chapter, endurance and steadfastness are used interchangeably.

⁵⁰ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 23.

⁵¹ Boring, *Thessalonians*, 60.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:3, however, the emphasis is on the actions not what motivates the actions. Paul “remembers before our God and Father” the “work,” “labor,” and “steadfastness” of the people in the church.⁵² Boring, for instance, states the Paul is characterizing the life of the Thessalonian believer as “faith-work, love-labor, and hope-endurance.”⁵³ Malherbe similarly indicates that Paul is saying that “the Thessalonians’ faith works, their love labors, and their hope endures.”⁵⁴ Gateway Seminary professor of New Testament Studies Michael Martin summarizes the intent of Paul by saying that he “gave thanks for a faith that was shown to be real by the evidence visible in the lives of the believers.”⁵⁵

“Work of faith” does not point to salvation by works as opposed to salvation by faith. Paul uses the same phrase in his second letter to the Thessalonians: “We always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 11-12). The “work of faith” is, as Martin summarizes, “the deeds that result from the indwelling of the Spirit.”⁵⁶ Paul tells the reader that he is “comforted about you through your faith” (3:7) because Timothy has reported “good news of your faith” (3:6). The evidence of their belief was visible.

⁵² D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 33, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2002), 56.

⁵³ Boring, *Thessalonians*, 60.

⁵⁴ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 109.

⁵⁵ Martin, *Thessalonians*, 56.

⁵⁶ Martin, *Thessalonians*, 56.

“Labor of love” is most likely focused to others, just as “work of faith” and “steadfastness of hope” would be directed towards or derived from God. The usage of “labor” here may have a particular connotation of sharing the Gospel as suggested by Fee⁵⁷ and Boring⁵⁸. This may be too specific as Paul directs them to “abound in love for one another and for all” (3:12), a reference to those within the church as well as to those beyond the church. Paul also reminds them that they “have been taught by God to love one another” (4:9). Love is an outward action that, again, Timothy was able to witness: “Timothy ... has brought us the good news of your ... love” (3:6).

“Steadfastness of hope” foreshadows the discussion of the future resurrection and Christ’s return in 4:13-5:11. This steadfastness is not a passive feeling or wishful thinking, but a confident assurance that is revealed, as Boring states it, in “an active manifestation of one’s commitments.”⁵⁹ Paul was concerned about the faith of those he left behind and sent Timothy “for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain” (3:5). Despite outside persecution (“for you suffered the same things from your own countrymen,” 2:14), Timothy was able to report that they were “standing fast in the Lord” (3:8). In turn, because of their steadfastness in the faith, the Thessalonian believers were able to comfort Paul in his “distress and affliction” (3:7).

Brothers and Sisters Loved and Chosen by God (1:4)

Paul, after thanking God by mentioning the Thessalonian believers in the prayers and by remembering their work, labor, and steadfastness, concludes the triad by thanking

⁵⁷ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 25.

⁵⁸ Boring, *Thessalonians*, 60.

⁵⁹ Boring, *Thessalonians*, 61.

God, knowing that God has chosen them. “For we know, brothers [and sisters] loved by God, that he has chosen you” (1:4). The church in Thessalonica is ultimately a result not of Paul’s actions or the believers’ responses, but of God’s work. Martin states that the verb phrase “loved by God” implies an ongoing relationship and not just a moment from the past.⁶⁰ This choosing, or election, emphasizes the work of God through the missionaries. Even though they were the messengers, the Holy Spirit was at work in the message, taught and modeled by the missionaries.

An important point of this phrase not to be overlooked is the use of *adelphoi*, which is properly translated “brothers and sisters.” This word is used fourteen times in this short letter, a rate much higher than in Paul’s other letters.⁶¹ This is more evidence of Paul’s love and familial feeling towards the church in Thessalonica. The Thessalonian believers are beloved by God and considered family by Paul. Paul is “affectionately desirous” of them and they had “become very dear” to him (2:8). Paul was “like a nursing mother taking care of her own children” (2:7) and “like a father with his children” (2:11). Paul was absent from the church “in person not in heart” (2:17). There is a demonstrated caring relationship between Paul and the Thessalonian believers.

Word and Power in the Holy Spirit with Full Conviction (1:5)

Richard argues that the major contrast in the phrase “not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” is between “word” and “power.” Therefore “in the Holy Spirit” and “with full conviction” describe two aspects of

⁶⁰ Martin, *Thessalonians*, 57.

⁶¹ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 109.

“power.” “In the Holy Spirit” is the divine source of the power and “with full conviction” is the result of the effect of the power on the recipients.⁶²

Shogren indicates that “power” (*dynamis*) can point to either the message itself containing power to change lives or to miraculous deeds that confirmed the message.⁶³ Malherbe, although recognizing that there are occasions of mighty works in Scripture, argues that the emphasis in First Thessalonians is on the importance that Paul attaches to preaching. Therefore he concludes, “the power found expression in mighty works which [Paul] considered signs of his apostleship, but there is no indication that he thought of such objective demonstrations here.”⁶⁴ Boring agrees by stating, “Although miraculous phenomena accompanied the apostolic preaching, Paul is not contrasting the weakness of word-without-miracles and the power of word-plus-miracles. The contrast is between mere human word and the power of God’s word.”⁶⁵

Martin, instead, argues, “The word used for ‘power’ (*dynamis*) is also one of the words used in the Gospels for Jesus’ miracles. It was God’s power, not Paul’s, that was demonstrated among the Thessalonians.”⁶⁶ Agreeing with Martin, Shogren suggests that the evidence for miraculous deeds is stronger because the early church often linked the message of the gospel with miracles. Mark 16:20 reads: “And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.” Hebrews 2:3-4 is similar: “It was declared at first by the Lord, and

⁶² Richard, *Thessalonians*, 48.

⁶³ Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 63.

⁶⁴ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 112.

⁶⁵ Boring, *Thessalonians*, 64. The apostle Paul also emphasizes the importance of power along with words in Galatians 3:2-5, 1 Corinthians 2:4, and 1 Corinthians 4:20.

⁶⁶ Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 58.

it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.” Paul speaks directly of his ministry as accompanied by signs and wonders: “For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God” (Rom. 15:18-19). To the Galatians he writes: “Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ... Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith” (Gal. 2, 5).

Charles A. Wanamaker, Professor of Christian Studies at the University of Cape Town, also argues for *dínamis* as pointing to miraculous signs and wonders. He does so by referencing manifestations of power in Paul’s missionary work as described in Gal. 3:5, Rom. 15:18f, and 2 Cor. 12:12f.⁶⁷ Miraculous works by Paul are also described in Acts 14:3; 16:17-18; and 19:6, 11-12. The example of Paul’s life, the life he commends the Thessalonian church to imitate, reflects the power of miraculous deeds. Wanamaker concludes, “[Paul] insists here that his preaching consisted in both the words that were spoken and the power that was manifested to the Thessalonians at the time.”⁶⁸ Fee agrees by stating that although “the first referent in the present language is to Paul’s Spirit-anointed preaching Christ, the very presence of the ‘power of the Spirit’ most likely implies ... accompanying phenomena as well.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 79.

⁶⁸ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 79.

⁶⁹ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 35-36.

The power of the Holy Spirit, whether seen in Spirit-filled preaching or also in manifestations of signs and wonders, was clearly present. There was full conviction in how the gospel came so that there was no doubt that the message was from God. Paul thanked God constantly because the Thessalonians accepted the word of God “not as the word of men but for what it really is, the word of God” (2:13).

I would argue that Spirit-filled preaching in which the Holy Spirit is convincingly present is also a sign and wonder. We recall that after Peter’s sermon to the gathered Jews on Pentecost, “they were cut to the heart” and three thousand souls were converted (Acts 2:37-41).⁷⁰ However, the Scriptural evidence for signs and wonders manifestations of the Holy Spirit throughout the apostles’ ministry strongly suggests that Paul is referring to these when he says, “our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1:5).

The Thessalonian believers saw the power of the Holy Spirit present in the missionaries’ ministry. Thus, Paul reminds them, “Do not quench the Spirit” (5:19). In particular they were to “not despise prophecies, but test everything” (5:20-21). The Thessalonian believers were then to imitate the missionaries in being wisely open to the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They were to be an example to others so that the gospel would be shown in them in word and in power.

⁷⁰ The three thousand may have seen the signs and wonders of the tongues of fire, but they definitely heard the word miraculously spoken in their native languages. They were “cut to the heart” because of Peter’s Spirit-empowered sermon (“Word”), which was accompanied by the signs and wonders (“Power”).

Imitation (1:6)

In virtually every letter, Paul either presents himself as an example (*tupon*)⁷¹ or as one to imitate (*mimetes*)⁷². This does not mean that he was arrogant but that the truth of the gospel was lived out in him. Paul was to be imitated only in that he in turn imitated Christ. Paul gives thanks because the church of the Thessalonians “became imitators of us and of the Lord” (1:6). The missionaries lived out their faith in demonstrable ways so that Paul could say, “You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake” (1:5). To the church of Corinth, Paul states clearly the type of imitation he is talking about: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

Being an example of the message was important to the Greco-Roman culture of time. Malherbe gives numerous examples of Greco-Roman philosophers who justified their roles as moral reformers by their motivations and the way they described how a philosopher should live.⁷³ In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus showed how to detect a false prophet: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. ... A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ... Thus you will recognize them by their fruits” (Matt. 5:15-19). Thus, the effectiveness of the message is dependent upon the character of the messenger. In colloquial terms, it is just as important to “walk the walk” as it is to “talk the talk.”

⁷¹ See Rom. 5:14; 6:17; 1 Cor. 10:6; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:7; and 2 Thess. 3:9.

⁷² See 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Eph. 5:1; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14; and 2 Thess. 3:7, 9.

⁷³ Abraham J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation, A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1986), 34-40.

So, was it the words or the example that effected the transformational change in the Thessalonian believers? The surprising answer may be: neither. Theologian M. Bruce Button of North-West University in South Africa examines social-scientific models of leadership with respect to Paul's method of influence as exhibited in First Thessalonians. Button's study is revealing in that the of social power "to effect a change in the beliefs, opinions, attitudes and behavior of another person" do not seem to explain the type of influence observed from Paul to the Thessalonian believers.⁷⁴ The bases of social power⁷⁵ depend on the "cognition, emotions, and psychological state of the subject, and on the way in which the influencing agent appeals to the subject's cognition, emotions and psychological state."⁷⁶ In other words, the model types of social power are human-centered and solely dependent upon the persons being influenced and the persons doing the influencing. This is not what happens with the Thessalonian believers.

In First Thessalonians, Button points out that "Paul states explicitly in the letter that God's power was at work in them by his Spirit through the gospel, and that the power for change came ultimately from God."⁷⁷ Even though Button points out from the beginning that Paul sought to influence the Thessalonians primarily by "preaching the gospel and living a life that conformed to its values,"⁷⁸ the credit for the transformation

⁷⁴ M. Bruce Button, "Paul's Method of Influence in 1 Thessalonians," In *Die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 50, no. 2 (August 2016): 2, 6, accessed March 10, 2018, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v50i2.2113>.

⁷⁵ There are six bases of social power for interpersonal influence: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, expert power, and information power. These are described in detail in Button, "Method of Influence," 2-4. Button is clear that none of these powers, however, explain the transformation that Paul describes happened in the Thessalonian believers.

⁷⁶ Button, "Method of Influence," 6.

⁷⁷ Button, "Method of Influence," 6.

⁷⁸ Button, "Method of Influence," 1.

belongs to God. “The gospel as the good news of God’s salvation in Christ is God’s means of creating faith in and transforming the lives of those whom he called.”⁷⁹ It is critical to Paul that he preach and effectively model the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is why he is so adamant that the Thessalonian believers should imitate him. However, the real transformational power belongs to God, both God’s work in Paul and God’s work in the recipients. That is why Paul gives thanks to God for what has happened in the lives of the Thessalonian believers.

This does not minimize the importance of imitation. As Boring states, “The lives the missionaries lived demonstrated the genuineness of their gospel and at the same time gave the new converts a flesh and blood example of what it meant to live as a follower of Jesus.”⁸⁰ Because of what the missionaries said and what they did, Paul can transition the letter to how the Thessalonians should respond by saying: “Finally, then, brothers [and sisters], we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more” (4:1).

One practical example of the combined importance of teaching and modeling is Paul’s desire for the people to continue to work for a living. It seems that some in the church may have thought that Christ’s return was so immanent that they no longer needed to work for a living while they waited. As a result, they became financially dependent upon others. Paul indicates that the missionaries instructed the Thessalonian believers to work with their hands in order to be dependent upon no one (4:11-12). However, they

⁷⁹ Button, “Method of Influence,” 1.

⁸⁰ Martin, *Thessalonians*, 60.

also saw this modeled in the missionaries who worked night and day so as not to be a burden (2:9). As Malherbe summarizes, “[Paul] conducted himself in a manner that could not be separated from the manner in which he preached.”⁸¹

Being an Example (1:7)

Paul gives thanks that those who had imitated him in the faith are now themselves being an example to others. The word translated “example” is *tupon* from which we derive the word “type” as in “typeface.” The word *tupon* refers “to the mold used to form the stamp or seal that leaves its impression.”⁸² A mold is impressed upon an original and then, being conformed to the original, can be used to impress the original form onto other pliable objects. Paul refers to himself as a *tupon* in Philippians 3:17 (“Join in imitating me [*mimetes*], and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example [*tupon*] you have in us”) and in 2 Thessalonians 3:9 (“to give you in ourselves an example [*tupon*] to imitate [*mimetes*]”). He also encourages Titus, his “true child in a common faith” (Tit. 1:4), to “show yourself in all respects to be a model [*tupon*] of good works” (2:6).

As Boring eloquently states, “By his encounter with the risen Christ, ... [Paul’s] life has been molded into a certain shape. He in turn, in his interaction with the new converts in the mission churches he establishes, exercises a molding influence on them. They, molded by him, shape the lives of others.”⁸³ The disciple of Jesus Christ should strive for this type-molding. Disciples should be “conformed to the image of [God’s]

⁸¹ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 113.

⁸² Boring, *Thessalonians* 66.

⁸³ Boring, *Thessalonians*, 67.

Son” (Romans 8:29) so that they can transfer this image of Christ onto others, so that they in turn can transfer the image of Christ onto still others.

The Thessalonian church had proven to be an archetype of this molding effect.⁸⁴ Although certainly an exaggeration for effect, they became “an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.” Paul mentions Macedonia and Achaia twice in this passage (1:7, 8) emphasizing the spread of the gospel to these provinces as a reality. Macedonia was the province in which Thessalonica was located and Achaia was the province to the south where Athens was located. With Thessalonica being a major city on the Egnatian Way, evangelism could take place as traders and travelers entered and left Thessalonica on this Roman road. However it may have happened, that the Thessalonian church was being an effective example is demonstrably evident.

Professor Emeritus Jon Mark Ruthven argues in his book, *What’s Wrong with Protestant Theology?*, that the mimesis theme (from the Greek *mimetes* meaning “imitation”) “is extraordinarily large in the New Testament.”⁸⁵ Ruthven summarizes that the significance of mimesis is that for the disciple of Jesus, the early Disciples and all subsequent generational disciples, an “exact duplication of Jesus’ mission is intended” and that “no detail of [Jesus’] life is to be ignored or not replicated.”⁸⁶ Throughout his book, Ruthven uses the emphasis of Scripture to show that “a central New Testament

⁸⁴ Martin points out that although Paul frequently refers to imitation of individuals, including himself, only here does he commend an entire body of believers for being a “type that inspired the discipleship of others.” Martin, *Thessalonians*, 62.

⁸⁵ Jon Mark Ruthven, *What’s Wrong with Protestant Theology? Tradition vs. Biblical Emphasis* (Tulsa, OK: Word and Spirit Press, 2013), 275.

⁸⁶ Ruthven, *What’s Wrong*, 278.

theme in Jesus' ministry was that he is presented not only as a unique sacrifice for sin, but is himself a normative exemplar of charismatic ministry for others to replicate."⁸⁷

As one of many examples, Ruthven refers specifically to the First Thessalonians passage of interest here stating, "1 Thessalonians 1:5-6 displays the pattern of imitation not only to the third generation, but to the fourth!"⁸⁸ Thus, this imitation pattern refutes the cessationist idea that the charismatic gifts ended with the Apostles. Ruthven does a great job of summarizing the focus of this passage:

1 Thessalonians 1:5 is a summary of Paul's pattern of representing the Gospel "not in word only (as in traditional Protestantism), but also in power (*en dunamei*—the most frequent word for "miracle/mighty work" in the New Testament) and in the Holy Ghost (*en pneumatic hagiō*)—carrying a strong overtone of prophetic anointing) and in much assurance (that is, in strong confirmation)." The Thessalonians are reminded that they came to know by experience and interaction ... what sort of messengers Paul and the others proved to be. At this point, Paul notes that the Thessalonians then, "became imitators of us and of the Lord!" The context demands that the Thessalonians were both imitating and modeling for others (v 7) Paul's miraculous/charismatic gospel presentation, mentioning specifically among other things, their faith in God—a charismatic gift of the Spirit.⁸⁹

The imitation pattern that Paul reveals to the Thessalonians, then, includes the supernatural ministry of signs and wonders.

Turned to God to Serve and to Wait (1:9-10)

The final phrase of the thanksgiving pericope also alludes to the imitation and example motif. The believers in Macedonia and Achaia "themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you" (1:9). The reception referred to here is the

⁸⁷ Ruthven, *What's Wrong*, 270.

⁸⁸ Ruthven, *What's Wrong*, 279.

⁸⁹ Ruthven, *What's Wrong*, 285.

reception of the gospel by the Thessalonian believers as a result of the message and presence of the missionaries.

The reception has threefold evidence. They “turned to God from idols,” they “serve the living and true God,” and they “wait for his Son from heaven.” This also references what Paul says about their “work of faith” (they turned to God), their “labor of love” (they serve God), and their “steadfastness in hope” (they wait for Jesus). In a culture surrounded by numerous temples to pagan gods and goddesses, turning from idols was a true act of faith. They turned to the “living God” over the lifeless idols of the pagan world and the “true God” over the false gods of idolatry.⁹⁰ This living and true God is further defined as the Christian God through God’s “Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come” (1:10).

This final eschatological phrase, “to wait for his Son from heaven,” has importance to the present lives of the Thessalonian believers. Because “the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (5:2), they were to “therefore encourage one another and build one another up” (5:11). They were also to have their “whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:23). Waiting was not to be a passive event, but an active life of holiness and love. Waiting is an ongoing action. Therefore, Paul can conclude his letter with: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (5:16-18).

⁹⁰ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 47.

Conclusion

The opening thanksgiving pericope of First Thessalonians speaks of the gospel coming to the people of Thessalonica “not only in word, but also in power” (1:5). W&P keeps a priority on Scripture but adds a parallel priority on the power of the Holy Spirit as manifested in Scripture and the lives of the participants. The focus of this thanksgiving passage is on God affecting the reception of the gospel through imitation and example. This provides guidance on how God’s word and the power can be effectively realized.

Most likely the first New Testament text ever written, Paul writes a letter “to the church of the Thessalonians” that is full of thanksgiving and affection. This new genre of epistle literature results from Paul following up with a beloved church that he had helped start. That God is the primary actor is clear in that “God” is used thirty-one times in this short letter, including seven times in the salutation and opening thanksgiving. The thanksgiving and the letter as a whole have two major orientation points: God’s action and the human response to God’s action.

What is critical to Paul is that God acted through him and the other missionaries in both what they said and how they modeled what they said. On the one hand, word and power can mean the Word of God and the manifestation of the Power of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, the word can be the teachings by Paul and power can be how Paul modeled the teaching in the power of the Holy Spirit. In both ways, however, God is the primary actor for even the teachings of Paul and the life that Paul modeled are enabled by the Holy Spirit.

The passage under consideration has a primary verb of *eucharistoumen* (“we give thanks”) from which everything else flows. Paul and his co-missionaries give thanks as they (1) constantly mention the Thessalonian church in their prayers, (2) remember the work of faith, labor of love and steadfastness of hope in the Thessalonian church, and (3) know that God has chosen the Thessalonian believers as evidenced by the gospel coming not only in word, but also in power. In each of these items there is the element of imitation and response.

Paul constantly mentioned the church in his prayers (1:2), thanked God constantly that the Thessalonian believers received the Word of God (2:13), prayed earnestly day and night that he could visit them again (3:10), and reminded the church to “pray without ceasing” and to “give thanks in all circumstances” (5:17-18). Paul gave instructions on prayer but also modeled prayer. In fact, all of Paul’s letters, except for his scathing letter to the Galatians, mentions prayer. Paul was a man of prayer and could be imitated as a man of prayer.

The Thessalonian believers, despite being surrounded by a pagan culture that opposed them, were demonstrating Christian lives. They showed works of faith, displayed labors of love, and were steadfast in their hope. Timothy was able to report to Paul, as described in 3:6-10, the good news of their faith and love. They showed in their actions that they had turned to God from idols, that they served God, and that they expectedly waited for the return of Jesus. As such they were examples to others, especially in Macedonia and Achaia.

The gospel was shown to be realized in the Thessalonian believers because of how the gospel was given and received. The gospel was the word of God (2:13) and

taught as such by Paul and the missionaries. However, the power of God was also made manifest. By signs and wonders, but also in the Holy Spirit empowered preaching of the message, “the gospel came ... in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1:5). Because of the word of God being visible in the Thessalonian believers, the “word of the Lord sounded forth” from them to Macedonia, Achaia, and everywhere (1:8) so much so that Paul did not even have to say anything. The Thessalonians that had received the gospel were now examples to others of this same gospel.

Paul presents himself as either one to imitate (*mimetes*) or as an example (*tupon*) in virtually every letter. He confidently gives thanks to God in telling the Thessalonian believers that they “know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake” (1:5). The Thessalonian church imitated (*mimetes*) Paul and then became an example (*tupon*) to others. The Greek word *tupon* refers to a mold that is made by impressing on an original, which in turn is used to mold others into the same shape. What a powerful concept in terms of God working through believers. Paul was impressed upon by Christ so that Paul spoke and acted as Christ would. By imitating Paul, the Thessalonian believers in turn became impressed upon so that they were molds for others. The original is Christ, who molded Paul, who molded the Thessalonian believers, who the molded other believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

As I worked through this passage, I was struggling with personally applying what Paul meant by “be imitators of us and the Lord.” Being imitators of Christ should be the goal of every Christian so I can understand why Paul would encourage that. I could even understand that Paul would invite Christians to imitate him. After all, he was an apostle who was able to share the gospel effectively with displays of power. I have been an

effective pastor inasmuch as I have gifts and abilities that have proved to be effective in the church. However, I do not want people to imitate my gifts and abilities; they would be working in the flesh and not the Spirit.

During a time of fasting and prayer, I went for a walk. I call these “walks with Jesus” as I imagine Jesus going for a stroll right beside me. I told Jesus about this passage by saying, “I don’t want people to imitate me!” I could sense Jesus smiling at me and then I heard him say: “I want people to imitate you in the very ways that you imitate me.” Of course, this is absolutely true, but when I heard the words spoken to me directly by Jesus they carried the force of great authority! Jesus, by his teaching, miracles, crucifixion, and resurrection, brought the gospel “not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.” My desire is to so fully imitate Jesus that I become a *tupon* of Christ, an example of Christ in me. Then others, who imitate me, cannot help but be imitating Jesus as well. In this way, with full confidence, I can also say to others, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

In revising DBS, my calling has been to better emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit, both in Scripture and in the lives of the participants. As has become clear from 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10, W&P must involve not only the participants encountering the Holy Spirit in Scripture, but also being open to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The implementation of W&P will only be complete with the demonstration of God’s power in the lives of the participants. Along with leading the participants into the Word of God, the manifestation of Holy Spirit power in the life of the leader(s) will be critical. As the Thessalonians were able to imitate the work of God in Paul’s life, the Disciple

participants should also be able to imitate the work of God in the life of the leader(s). In turn, the participants will be examples to others of the dual impact of Word and Power.

Using this Thessalonian passage as a model, any effort to bring the Word of God and the Power of the Holy Spirit together must be the work of God. As much as leaders must be willing to teach, with words, what it means to live in word and power, the leaders must also model this as well. If leaders want others to have a meaningful prayer life in which God speaks and moves, they must teach this and live it! If leaders want others to be open to signs and wonders in their lives, they must be open to them. If leaders want others to be transformed by the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives, they must be transformed. Leading a congregation to expect the Holy Spirit to manifest in miraculous ways requires their pastor to live in expectancy. In short, leaders need to imitate Christ in word and power so that others would imitate them in word and power.

However, as made clear by Paul, the spiritual transformation that occurred in the lives of the Thessalonian believers was not the result of the hard work and talents of the missionaries. God was, and is, the only source of this transformation. That is why the whole passage is a thanksgiving to God for what God has done through the Holy Spirit. Thessalonica was a successful city with many religions that had no apparent need for Christianity. Yet, the gospel came “not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thess. 1:5) resulting in believers that became examples to many others. In a similar manner, a successful church with no apparent need for the supernatural power of God can increase in understanding, practice, and ministry in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit through God’s work in them “not only in word, but also in power.” This is the hope of “Word and Power.”

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Methodist Revival of the 1700's in England was led by John Wesley (1703-1791). The early start of Methodism can be traced to a small "Holy Club" that John helped found at Oxford in 1729,¹ which included his brother Charles and George Whitefield among others. At the time of Wesley's death in 1791, Methodism had grown to 71,688 members in Great Britain and 43,265 members in America.² This Methodist movement continues to this day, of course, with an estimate of over 75 million in the total world Methodist community.³

How the Methodist movement became so widespread and successful is a matter for much debate and the topic of many scholarly works. However, the years of 1738-39 are pivotal in the life of John Wesley and subsequently to the future of Methodism. Many Methodists might recognize that May 24, 1738 falls in this timeframe. This is remembered in Methodist liturgical calendars as "Aldersgate Day" where, as the official United Methodist website states, "John Wesley experienced assurance of his salvation"

¹ "Holy Club," *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., ed. E.A. Livingstone (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), 785.

² "Wesley, John," *Oxford Dictionary*, 1739-40.

³ "Methodist Churches," *Oxford Dictionary*, 1084-1086. This number is quoted from the year 2000 and includes members of Methodist related denominations such as The United Methodist Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, autonomous Methodist Churches in places like New Zealand, Nigeria, Hong Kong (to name just a few), and Protestant unions such as the United Church of Canada and the United Church of Australia. The number is presented just to show the lasting and effective influence of the Methodist movement started by John and Charles Wesley.

when his heart was “strangely warmed.”⁴ This is not the only event of significance during these two years. *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* lists “Some Major Events in John Wesley’s Life” that include the following:

1737, Dec. 22-Feb. 1, 1738, returned to England [from America]
 1738, May 1, with Peter Böhler formed Fetter Lane Society, London
 1738, May 24, felt his heart ‘strangely warmed’
 1738, June 13-Sept. 16, visited Moravians at Herrnhut
 1739, Apr. 2, following Whitefield’s example, began field-preaching in Bristol
 1739, June 3, preaching in the shell of the New Room, Bristol
 1739, Nov. 6, the Revd. Samuel Wesley, Jun., died, aged 49
 1739, Nov. 11, preached in the ruins of the Foundry, London⁵

This list leaves off at least two other significant events. Just prior to Wesley’s experience at Aldersgate, his brother Charles had a similar experience on May 21, 1738 where he felt a “strange palpitation of heart” when he heard Christ speak to him (via the voice of a Mrs. Turner). This experience of Charles had a profound effect on his spiritual life. Charles Wesley even titled this date in his journal with oversized capitalized print as “The Day of Pentecost.”⁶ In addition, on January 1, 1739 at an overnight love-feast, Wesley and some sixty others experienced “the power of God” come mightily upon them and many even “fell to the ground.”⁷ This latter event may be more important than what may be indicated by its absence from the list of major events in the Bicentennial Edition. This experience of the power of the Holy Spirit may be the separation point between John

⁴ “What is Aldersgate Day?” UMC.org (official website of The United Methodist Church), accessed July 5, 2018, <https://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/what-is-aldersgate-day>.

⁵ Frank Baker, “Some Major Events in John Wesley’s Life,” *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed. Frank Baker (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1976–), vol. 25, xxi.

⁶ Charles Wesley, “May 21, 1738,” *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, M.A.*, ed. S T Kimbrough, Jr. and Kenneth G.C. Newport (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2008), vol. 1, 90-92.

⁷ John Wesley, “January 1, 1739,” *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976–), vol. 19, 29.

Wesley as a diligent clergyman with some success due to his strong work ethic and efforts and John Wesley the Spirit-empowered man through whom God started an entire movement.

John Wesley was an extremely earnest and diligent man. This was true his entire life, including prior to his Aldersgate and love-feast experiences of 1738-39. Wesley had started his journal in 1725 as “basically a brief record and engagement diary, expanded somewhat, but not greatly, in the 1730s when Wesley became anxious to use the document as a means of self-examination, at least as regards the profitable use of time.”⁸ John Wesley’s hard work in the natural, from the diligence of the Holy Club to his missionary work in the Georgia colony in America, did not lead to the amazing Methodist movement. As premiere Wesley scholar Richard P. Heitzenrater⁹ points out, the claim that Aldersgate was a “watershed” event is often supported “by repeating a general perception that the Methodist movement began to spread like wildfire across England in response to Wesley’s new-found zeal” starting in 1738.¹⁰ But did this “zeal” come on May 24, 1738 at Aldersgate?

⁸ Richard P. Heitzenrater, “The Construction of Wesley’s *Journal*,” *The Works of John Wesley: Journal and Diaries I (1735-1738)*, ed. W. Reginald Ward (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1988), 86.

⁹ Dr. Richard P. Heitzenrater is considered one of the premier scholars of John Wesley. A brief list of his major accomplishments include “breaking the code” of Wesley’s personal diaries, general editing of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* which included textual editing of the seven volumes of *Journals and Diaries*, and chairing the writing committee of the Committee on Our Theological Task that wrote the present doctrinal statement in Part II of *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*. He is currently professor emeritus at Duke Divinity School. For more information see <https://divinity.duke.edu/faculty/richard-heitzenrater>, accessed July 25, 2018.

¹⁰ Richard P. Heitzenrater, “Great Expectations: Aldersgate and the Evidences of Genuine Christianity,” in *Aldersgate Reconsidered*, ed. by Randy L. Maddox (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1990), 49. Special thanks are due Dr. William J. Abraham of Perkins School of Theology for pointing me to this seminal paper in the debate regarding Wesley’s Aldersgate experience.

This chapter will give evidence that it was the Holy Spirit coming upon John Wesley and the others in the early morning hours of January 1, 1739 that ushered in a Spirit-led movement that resulted in the astounding results that literally changed the world. The Methodist Revival was certainly historically grounded in the theological and practical work of Wesley prior to 1739. Also, without Wesley's Aldersgate experience (and Charles Wesley's Pentecost experience a few days before), the Methodist Revival would have not likely occurred. Yet, the evidence presented in this chapter shows that the signs and wonders of the work of the Holy Spirit that were so important to the Methodist Revival did not begin in earnest until after the January 1, 1739 encounter with the power of the Holy Spirit.¹¹ The presenting issue is not in downplaying the Aldersgate experience of May 24, 1738 but in elevating the importance of the spiritual experience at Fetter Lane on January 1, 1739. The dichotomy is the work-based efforts of John Wesley through Aldersgate versus the Spirit-led movement following Fetter Lane.

The question that The United Methodist Church faces today hinges upon the same dichotomy that occurred in John Wesley's life: will we be a hard-working Church of the natural or will we choose instead to be Spirit-empowered into the supernatural? The microcosm of this question is reflected in my life as a pastor at a local church. I can be hard-working, too (although not nearly as hard-working as John Wesley). But something happened when Wesley instead became Spirit-filled and Spirit-led, which I maintain, started at Fetter Lane during that New Year's Day love-feast. What can I learn, and what

¹¹ Appendix A of this thesis records the supernatural occurrences in John Wesley's journal recorded during the seven months after his Aldersgate experience of May 24, 1738 and, for comparison, the seven months after his Fetter Lane experience of January 1, 1739.

can the Church learn, from Wesley? How did Wesley move from simply a hard-working clergyman to a Spirit-led evangelist?

John Wesley Prior to Aldersgate

The Holy Club of Oxford

Heitzenrater refers to Wesley's own description of three rises of Methodism prior to the revival of 1739. These are geographically based in Oxford, Georgia, and London.¹² The first rise, based in Oxford, was based primarily on the founding of the Holy Club in 1729-30. John Wesley, his brother Charles, George Whitefield and others were focused on a serious pursuit of holy living organized around "lists of questions, ciphers for diary entries, books for study, and schedules for visiting needy people."¹³ Due to their structured approach to faithful living, the group was variously called "Sacramentarians" (because they regularly attended church unlike many of their fellow Oxford students), "Holy Club," "Godly Club," "Supererogation Men," "Bible Moths," and eventually "Methodists."¹⁴ Wesley later reflected that "they always took me to be a little crack-brained at Oxford."¹⁵

The efforts of holy living were not without a spiritual basis. As Heitzenrater writes, "Wesley was aware of the ease with which such busyness could become an end in

¹² Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 33-95. Also Richard P. Heitzenrater, "The Founding Brothers," in *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, eds. William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), 32-37.

¹³ Heitzenrater, "Founding Brothers," 33.

¹⁴ Heitzenrater, "Founding Brothers," 33.

¹⁵ Wesley, "July 17, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 81.

itself ... [and] that the main point they needed to establish to make all their activity manageable was 'to have an habitual lively sense of our being only instruments in His hand'."¹⁶ However, Heitzenrater also states that Wesley's "seemingly frantic attempt to 'omit no duty either to God or man' evidenced his inner search for a sense of assurance, a desired conviction that he was a child of God."¹⁷

The work of the Holy Club was not without spiritual success as well. George Whitefield, although from a poorer class, was welcomed into the Holy Club. Whitefield would play a large role in the Methodist Revival. While visiting Gloucester in the spring of 1735 (three years prior to the similar experiences of John and Charles Wesley), Whitefield experienced new birth in Jesus Christ.¹⁸ In addition, Wesley and his Holy Club friends were active in teaching children, ministering to the poor and elderly, and ministering to prisoners at the Castle prison.¹⁹

Wesley in Georgia

The second rise of Methodism was during John and Charles Wesley's mission to Georgia. Heitzenrater writes that John Wesley was not certain the mission was God ordained, but that it may have been the act of dutiful sons in response to the death of their father. Samuel Wesley senior wanted to become a missionary to America and after his

¹⁶ Heitzenrater, *Wesley*, 42 quoting from a letter from Wesley to his father, "To the Revd. Samuel Wesley," dated December 11, 1730 (Wesley, *Works*, vol. 25, 257-8). Note that throughout this thesis punctuation, spelling, and italics are kept as presented in *Works*.

¹⁷ Heitzenrater, *Wesley*, 43.

¹⁸ Douglas M. Strong, "Whitefield, George," in *Historical Dictionary of Methodism: Third Edition*, eds. Charles Yrigoyen, Jr. and Susan E. Warrick (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2013), 394.

¹⁹ Heitzenrater, *Wesley*, 40-2.

death in 1735, John convinced Charles to pursue this endeavor.²⁰ Wesley wrote that the purpose of going to Georgia was “singly this—to save our souls, to live wholly to the glory of God.”²¹

An example of Wesley’s diligence is seen in the overseas journey to Georgia where he outlines his daily routine that began at four in the morning: one hour of private prayer, two hours of communal Bible reading and discussion, one hour for breakfast, one hour of public prayers, three hours of language instruction in German, one hour for an accountability group meeting, one hour for lunch, two hours for reading to or speaking to others about Christianity, one hour for evening prayers, one hour of private reading, one hour for a public worship service, one hour to “exhort and instruct one another,” and finally to bed around nine or ten.²²

Heitzenrater writes: “The Georgia mission is often portrayed as a total failure for the Wesley’s.” Evidence supporting that view includes Charles’ early return due to poor health, their clash with authorities, and John’s unfortunate romance with Sophy Hopkey that led to his departure back to England.²³ Yet in many ways, the Georgia could be considered successful. Under John’s leadership church attendance increased in Savannah, he published the first printed hymnbook in America (*Psalms and Hymns*), and he started the first “Methodist” meeting in America in June 1737.²⁴ On his overseas journeys

²⁰ Heitzenrater, “Founding Brothers,” 34.

²¹ Wesley, “October 14, 1735,” *Works*, vol. 18, 137.

²² Wesley, “October 21, 1735,” *Works*, vol. 18, 138.

²³ Heitzenrater, “Founding Brothers,” 34.

²⁴ Heitzenrater, “Founding Brothers,” 34-5.

and in America, Wesley encountered Moravians²⁵ who had the faith and assurance he desired for himself, leading to significant developments in Wesley's theology. Also important in view of the topic of this chapter, Heitzenrater notes that "the sermons Wesley wrote on shipboard [to America] begin to show an increasing acknowledgment of the Holy Spirit in his understanding of the spiritual pilgrimage."²⁶

London 1738 Prior to Aldersgate

Wesley journeyed from Georgia back to London between December 22, 1737 and February 1, 1738.²⁷ In his journal he summarizes his Georgia mission this way:

It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity. But what have I learned myself in the meantime? Why (what I the least of all suspected), that I who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God.²⁸ 'I am not mad', though I thus speak, but 'I speak the words of truth and soberness'.²⁹

Wesley's great concern for his salvation, or at least the assurance of his salvation, led him to seek out the Moravian guidance of Peter Böhler in early 1738. Wesley became "clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of 'that faith whereby alone we are saved',

²⁵ The Moravians were German pietists who followed the leadership of Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf of Herrnhut, Germany. See Heitzenrater, *Wesley*, 60.

²⁶ Heitzenrater, "Great Expectations," 62.

²⁷ Because of his ambivalence towards his time in Georgia, Wesley tried to dissuade George Whitefield from going to America. Whitefield happened to be leaving for America at the same time and from the same harbor that Wesley had just arrived. (Heitzenrater, "Founding Brothers," 35). History would show that Whitefield thankfully did not listen to Wesley and instead was the catalyst for the "Great Awakening" in America. (Strong, "Whitefield," 394-5). Though this chapter does not explore the life of Whitefield in detail, one cannot help but wonder if Whitefield's revival success in America was possible because of his encounter with new birth and the Holy Spirit in 1735 prior to his first journey to Georgia. One can only surmise what would have happened if Wesley had journeyed to America after his experiences of May 24, 1738 and January 1, 1739.

²⁸ Wesley edited this comment with a note he added in 1774, "I am not sure of this" (see footnote "h," Wesley, *Works*, vol. 18, 214).

²⁹ Wesley, "January 29, 1738," *Works*, vol. 18, 214.

with the full, Christian salvation.”³⁰ When tempted by his lack of faith to stop preaching, Böhler encouraged Wesley with the famous phrase, “Preach faith *till* you have it, and then, *because* you have it you *will* preach faith.”³¹ The next day, Wesley “began preaching this new doctrine, ... *salvation by faith alone*.”³² Just a few weeks after this encounter with Böhler, Wesley had his heart-warming experience on May 24, 1738 at Aldersgate.

Back in London, Wesley became active in the religious societies which had some Anglican clergy in attendance. On May 1, 1738 Böhler began a fellowship meeting at the home of James Hutton. Hutton, a London bookseller, had been “earnestly awakened” by Wesley’s preaching on “The One Thing Needful” just before Wesley’s journey to Georgia.³³ When Böhler left town, Wesley took on a leadership role in this society, although he was never the primary leader. Heitzenrater writes, “Wesley viewed the establishment of this society as the ‘third rise’ of Methodism.”³⁴ The work of Wesley in the early Oxford Holy Club now resulted in the beginning formation of one of Wesley’s great achievements: society meetings.

Supernatural Occurrences Prior to Aldersgate

Although the wild success of the Methodist Revival had not yet begun, Wesley could certainly be considered a very “successful” clergyman. He had established

³⁰ Wesley, “March 5, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 18, 228.

³¹ Wesley, “March 5, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 18, 228.

³² Wesley, “March 6, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 18, 228.

³³ Heitzenrater, *Wesley*, 76.

³⁴ Heitzenrater, “Founding Brothers,” 36.

ministries through the Holy Club to the poor, elderly, children, and imprisoned in Oxford. He had delivered a number of sermons that resulted in changed lives, including that of James Hutton noted above. Wesley had been a missionary to America where he saw congregations grow and a hymnal published. In early 1738, when he was thirty-five years old, Wesley was already an accomplished clergyman, mostly because of his hard work and holiness of life. But where was the work of the supernatural in Wesley's life?

Prior to May 24, 1738, Wesley seemed to have relatively few experiences that may be considered supernatural. In his summary text, *The Supernatural Occurrences of John Wesley*³⁵, pastor and evangelist Daniel Jennings includes only one such occurrence in Wesley's life prior to Aldersgate, recorded on March 28, 1736 when Wesley was in Savannah, Georgia during his missionary days in America. A gravely ill young man, Peter Wright, related an experience to Wesley: Peter heard his name being called and looked up to see his "room was as light as day, and I saw a man in very bright clothes stand by the bed, who said, 'Prepare yourself, for your end is nigh.'" The young man recovered temporarily from his illness with his "whole temper ... changed as well as his life." He died peacefully a few weeks later.³⁶ Note that Wesley is not directly involved with this supernatural occurrence and only retold what was conveyed to him first-hand.

Two other potentially supernatural occurrences not included by Jennings happened just a few days after Wesley wrote down the story of Peter Wright. On April 4,

³⁵ Daniel R. Jennings, *The Supernatural Occurrences of John Wesley* (Lexington, KY: Sean Multimedia, 2012). Although this is a self-published work (see seanmultimedia.com), The United Methodist Church includes this text as one of twelve cited in the bibliography of the Resolution, "Guidelines: The UMC and the Charismatic Movement," adopted in 2008 and readopted in 2016 by the General Conference. (See <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/guidelines-the-umc-and-the-charismatic-movement>, accessed July 12, 2018).

³⁶ Jennings, *Supernatural*, 169-70 and also Wesley, *Journal*, vol. 18, 154-5.

1736, Wesley fell sound asleep on a boat and was awakened to find the boat filling with water. He was able to escape and concluded, “Thou art the God of whom cometh salvation: thou art the Lord by whom we escape death.” Continuing on his journey the next day, he came ashore to find Charles extremely sick from dysentery. Wesley exclaimed, “But he mended from the hour he saw me. *This* also ‘hath God wrought’!”³⁷ It is remarkable that these events, supernatural or not, happened so quickly after hearing Peter Wright’s supernatural encounter with the man in bright clothes.

In addition, on his voyage to America, Wesley recorded the following:

One who was big with child, in a high fever, and almost wasted away with a violent cough, desired to receive the Holy Communion before she died. At the hour of her receiving she began to recover, and in a few days was entirely out of danger.³⁸

Wesley did not indicate that he prayed for her healing, but the power of God in Holy Communion was a very real presence in this woman’s life. Wesley was able to witness this potential miracle mainly due to his role as the clergy officiant over communion.³⁹

That Wesley had (or at least recorded) so very few direct supernatural experiences prior to Aldersgate⁴⁰ did not mean that Wesley did not have any interest in them. Dr. Robert Webster, Oxford trained church historian and professor at Regent University, includes in Appendix 1 of his book, *Methodism and the Miraculous*, “John Wesley’s

³⁷ Wesley, “April 4, 1736,” *Works*, vol. 18, 156.

³⁸ Wesley, “December 18, 1735,” *Works*, vol. 18, 141.

³⁹ Special thanks goes to Dr. Frank Billman for pointing out this potential supernatural incident in the life of John Wesley. Dr. Billman, through personal correspondence, indicated that he believed this healing “occurred in spite of Wesley, not because of him” (email dated July 30, 2018).

⁴⁰ There may be other potentially supernatural moments in Wesley’s life prior to Aldersgate that a more thorough reading of the early Wesley journals and writings could uncover. However, most likely these would be few and far between considering the lack of comment on them in the literature.

Summing Up the Matter of Old Jeffrey, 1726.”⁴¹ “Old Jeffrey” was the name given to a ghost whom the family claimed caused a number of strange events in the Epworth rectory between December 1716 and January 1717. Although very interested in the strange events occurring at the home, Wesley was not present in the rectory during this time as he was in residence at the Charterhouse school in London.⁴² Like Peter Wright’s story, Wesley is not directly involved and summarizes events as told to him.

John Wesley After Aldersgate (May 24, 1738)

Charles Wesley’s “Strange Palpitation of Heart”

Charles Wesley was awakened to the work of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday, May 21, 1738. In bold letters, Charles wrote in his journal, “The Day of Pentecost.”⁴³ On this day Charles had a supernatural occurrence.⁴⁴ He woke up Friday morning, May 19, with pain and difficulty breathing.⁴⁵ Still very sick on Sunday, Charles prayed, “O Jesus, thou hast said, I will come unto you. Thou hast said, I will send the Comforter to you. ... Accomplish it in thy time and manner.” Almost immediately he

⁴¹ Robert Webster, *Methodism and the Miraculous: John Wesley’s Idea of the Supernatural and Identification of Methodists in the Eighteenth Century* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2013), 207.

⁴² Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London, UK: Epworth Press, 2002), 58-9.

⁴³ A photocopy of Charles’ handwritten leaf with this title can be found in Charles Wesley, *Journal*, vol. 1, vii. Charles does not even have an entry for Easter Sunday, April 2, of that year. That he wrote boldly, “The Day of Pentecost,” would seem to be more a reflection of what happened that day in his life than just noting the liturgical calendar date. However, as a poet, Charles would certainly have noticed and would likely have wanted to draw attention to the fact that his personal Pentecost occurred on the same day as the celebration of Pentecost Sunday.

⁴⁴ The supernatural occurrences recorded in Charles Wesley’s *Journal* from May 21 to December 26, 1738, including his Pentecost experience, are quoted in Appendix B of this thesis.

⁴⁵ Charles Wesley, “Friday, May 19, 1738,” *Journal*, vol. 1, 104.

heard a voice (he thought was Mrs. Musgrave) say, “In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise, and believe, and thou shalt be healed of all thy infirmities!” He “felt ... a strange palpitation of heart.” In reality, Mrs. Musgrave was not even in the house and the voice came from Mrs. Turner who told Charles, “It was I, a weak sinful creature spoke, but the words were Christ’s. He commanded me to say them and so constrained me that I could not forbear.”⁴⁶ Even more remarkable was that Charles learned that Mrs. Turner had a dream “nearly the moment I was taken ill” on the Friday in which she opened the door to a person in white who said, “I am Jesus Christ.” Charles wrote that she “found herself full of the power of faith, so that she could scarce contain herself and almost doubted whether she was sober. At the same time she was enlarged in love and prayer for all mankind, and commanded to go and assure me from Christ of my recovery, soul and body.” The end result was that Charles was physically healed and wrote, “I now found myself at peace with God and rejoiced in the hope of loving Christ.”⁴⁷ Two days later, Charles wrote what is considered to be his first hymn. William Cannon, then Dean of the Candler School of Theology, writes: “At this time, so far as we know, Charles had not written a single hymn. Hymnody was the bequest of the Holy Spirit to him on his conversion.”⁴⁸

This supernatural encounter with Christ led Charles the next day, May 22, 1738, to write about John: “My brother coming, we joined in intercession for him. In the midst

⁴⁶ These words of Mrs. Turner could certainly be considered prophetic in that she was compelled to speak what she believed to be the very words of God given to her. The result of these words on Charles Wesley gives stronger evidence for their prophetic nature.

⁴⁷ Charles Wesley, “May 21, 1738,” *Journal*, vol. 1, 106-7.

⁴⁸ William R. Cannon, “John Wesley’s Years in Georgia,” *Association of Methodist Historical Societies*, 1963-07, 7, accessed December 1, 2019, <http://archives.gcah.org/handle/10516/1330>.

of prayers I almost believed the Holy Ghost was coming upon him.”⁴⁹ Charles was convinced of his supernatural healing as he wrote that same day: “An old friend called to see me under great apprehensions that I was running mad. His fears were not a little increased by my telling him the prayer of faith had healed me.”⁵⁰

On May 21, 1738, John Wesley heard a sermon on “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost” and then later received “surprising news” that Charles “had found rest to his soul” and that “his bodily strength returned also from that hour.”⁵¹ Heitzenrater believes that these events put pressure upon John for an assurance of salvation in the Moravian manner of instantaneous salvation as Böhler had taught.⁵²

John Wesley’s “Strange Warming of the Heart”

Charles’ supernatural experiences mounted the day of May 24, 1738. Charles participated in a communion service that morning where “Mrs. Pratt related her receiving Christ in a dream ... [and] from that time to this, being six years, she has enjoyed perfect peace.”⁵³ Also at this service was “Mr. Ainsworth, a little child, full of grief and fears and love. At our repeating the line of the hymn, ‘Now descend, and shake the earth,’ he fell down, as in agony” under the power of God.⁵⁴ Charles also wrote, “At eight [at night] I

⁴⁹ Charles Wesley, “May 22, 1738,” *Journal*, vol. 1, 109.

⁵⁰ Charles Wesley, “May 22, 1738,” *Journal*, vol. 1, 109.

⁵¹ Wesley, “May 21, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 18, 241.

⁵² Heitzenrater, “Great Expectations,” 67.

⁵³ Charles Wesley, “May 24, 1738,” *Journal*, vol. 1, 110.

⁵⁴ Charles Wesley, “May 24, 1738,” *Journal*, vol. 1, 110.

prayed by myself for love with some feeling and assurances of feeling more.”⁵⁵ Very close to this time, John Wesley was attending a society meeting at Aldersgate. John famously writes:

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.⁵⁶

Charles concludes this day’s events:

Towards ten my brother was brought in triumph by a troop of our friends and declared, ‘I believe.’ We sang the hymn with great joy and parted with prayer. At midnight I gave myself up to Christ, assured I was safe sleeping or waking. Had continual experience of his power to overrule all temptation, and confessed with joy and surprise that he was able to do exceeding abundantly for me, above what I can ask or think.⁵⁷

There is much debate about the importance of Aldersgate, especially with regard to John’s own view of this event. As this chapter is focused on the years 1738-39, it is instructive to consider what Wesley thought of the experience close to this time. In a letter dated October 30, 1738 to his brother, Samuel, Wesley wrote:

By a Christian I mean one who so believes in Christ as that sin hath no more dominion over him. And in this obvious sense of the word I was not a Christian till May 24 last past. For till then sin had the dominion over me, although I fought with it continually; but since then, from that time to this, it hath not. Such is the free grace of God in Christ.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Charles Wesley, “May 24, 1738,” *Journal*, vol. 1, 111.

⁵⁶ Wesley, “May 24, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 18, 249-50.

⁵⁷ Charles Wesley, “May 24, 1738,” *Journal*, vol. 1, 111.

⁵⁸ Wesley, “To the Revd. Samuel Wesley, Jun.” London, October 30, 1738. *Works*, vol. 12, 575.

Wesley may have changed his position on this over the years. As noted previously, Wesley wrote in his journal on January 29, 1738 “that I who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God.”⁵⁹ However, in 1774, he added a note to this entry that said, “I am not sure of this.”⁶⁰ Heitzenrater explains that “the process of theological reflection often takes years to work through a given problem—to integrate scriptural concepts, church teachings, life experiences, spiritual inspiration, and rational reflection.”⁶¹ Regardless of how to properly describe what happened to Wesley on that day, Aldersgate was a seminal moment. However, despite Wesley’s words to his brother that sin no longer had dominion over him, the months after Aldersgate were not spiritually smooth for Wesley.

Wesley’s Continued Angst Following His Aldersgate Experience

Wesley’s journal for months following Aldersgate are filled with doubt and questions. Albert Outler, one of the premier Wesley scholars of the twentieth century, writes that one of the curiosities of the May 24 Aldersgate experience is that before this date “Wesley records moments of equal, or nearly equal, spiritual exaltation; and in the first six months after ‘Aldersgate’ he reports numerous instances of acute spiritual depression, equal in severity to anything preceding.”⁶² Outler goes on to surmise that Aldersgate was not the only turning point in Wesley’s life, but “*one* in a *series* of the

⁵⁹ Wesley, “January 29, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 18, 214.

⁶⁰ Wesley, “footnote ‘h,’” *Works*, vol. 18, 214.

⁶¹ Heitzenrater, “Great Expectations,” 51.

⁶² Albert Outler, “The Aldersgate Experience,” *John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1964), 51. Outler references in the footnote to this quote “*Cf. Journal*, September 1738 to April 1739.” This date range is important in that the angst that Outler suggests remains in Wesley after Aldersgate will be shown to end almost immediately after January 1, 1739.

‘turning points’ in his passage from don to missionary to evangelist.”⁶³ It is noteworthy that the list of turning points Outler presents is “the German journey, the impact of Edwards’s *Faithful Narrative*, the rediscovery of the Homilies on salvation, faith and good works and, finally, the unanticipated response to his revival preaching at Bristol.”⁶⁴ Strangely, Outler makes no mention of the event of January 1, 1739.

In reading through Wesley’s journal entries, there are at least eleven entries in 1738 after the Aldersgate experience where Wesley reveals some form of spiritual depression (using Outler’s terminology).⁶⁵ For instance, Wesley writes the day after Aldersgate (May 25), “Yet the enemy injected fear. ... Then inferred I, well may fears be within *me*; but I must go on, and tread them under my feet.”⁶⁶ Struggles continued on May 26 (“My soul continued in peace, but yet in heaviness”), May 27 (“believing one reason of my want of joy was want of time for prayer”), May 28 (“I waked in peace, but not in joy”), and May 29 (“Yet ... did I grieve the Spirit of God”).⁶⁷

A couple of weeks later Wesley “felt a soreness in my heart.”⁶⁸ It was then that Wesley decided to journey to Herrnhut where he “hoped the conversing with those holy men who were themselves living witnesses of the full power of faith, and yet able to bear with those that are weak, would be a means, under God, of so stablishing my soul.”⁶⁹ His

⁶³ Outler, “Aldersgate,” *Wesley*, 52.

⁶⁴ Outler, “Aldersgate,” *Wesley*, 52.

⁶⁵ May 25, May 26, May 27, May 28, May 29, June 3, June 6, June 7, October 14, October 27, and November 23 of 1738 (see these dates in Wesley, *Works*, vols. 18 and 19).

⁶⁶ Wesley, “May 25, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 18, 250-1.

⁶⁷ Wesley, *Works*, vol. 18, 251-253.

⁶⁸ Wesley, “June 6, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 18, 254.

⁶⁹ Wesley, “June 7, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 18, 254.

journey to Herrnhut reads more like a bitter travel journal in which Wesley does not refrain from commenting on “bad beds,” an “ill-built” city, a “misshapen” cathedral, an “unhandsome town,” “poor accommodations,” a “bad inn,” and the “senseless, inhuman usage of strangers, which we met with at almost every German city.”⁷⁰ However, during his visit in Herrnhut until his return to England on September 16, 1738, Wesley did not record any spiritually low moments.

After returning to England, Wesley had continued moments of angst. He wrote on October 14, “I cannot find in myself the love of God or of Christ. Hence my deadness and wanderings in public prayer. ... Yea, at this moment, I feel no more love to him than to one I had never heard of. ... I have not that ‘joy in the Holy Ghost’.”⁷¹ On October 30, in a letter to his brother Samuel, Wesley defends his position that he was not a real Christian prior to Aldersgate but that “by the grace of God I am now free” and now enjoyed “some measure of this faith.” However, regarding “‘the seal of the Spirit’, ‘the love of God shed abroad in my heart’, and producing joy in the Holy Ghost, ‘joy which no man taketh away’, ‘joy unspeakable, and full of glory’,” he writes that “this witness of the Spirit I have not, but I patiently wait for it. I know many who have already received it, more than one or two in the very hour we were praying for it.”⁷²

The last record of spiritual depression during the months in 1738 following Aldersgate is recorded on November 23, 1738:

I was troubled. I begged of God an answer of peace and opened on these words, ‘As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.’ I was asking in the evening that God would fulfil all his

⁷⁰ Wesley, *Works*, vol. 18, 255, 257, 258, 262, 262, and 265, respectively.

⁷¹ Wesley, “October 14, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 18, 18-19.

⁷² Wesley, “To the Rev. Samuel Wesley, Jun.,” *Works*, vol. 25., 575-578.

promises in my soul, when I opened my Testament on those words, ‘My hour is not yet come.’

Is this a prophecy from God of the coming supernatural event during the love-feast⁷³ at Fetter Lane on January 1, 1739?

Supernatural Occurrences Between Aldersgate and January 1, 1739

Besides the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing assurance of salvation to John Wesley at Aldersgate, there are a few events that could be considered “supernatural occurrences” in the seven months between May 24, 1738 and the Fetter Lane meeting on January 1, 1739. There are potentially only five events in Wesley’s journals during this timeframe that can be evaluated as to whether they are supernatural occurrences and, specifically, what could be considered “signs and wonders” events.⁷⁴ There are very few supernatural occurrences noted by Wesley prior to Aldersgate so even these potential five are a significant increase in frequency. However, as will be noted, the occurrences prior to January 1, 1739 are less dramatic than those that would occur after and only two of these occurrences will be categorized as supernatural “signs and wonders.”

Three of the five events in the last half of 1738 are “supernatural occurrences” but not in the sense of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit revealed in a signs and wonders. For instance, on June 3 Wesley was cowed by an old enemy and was tempted not to respond,

⁷³ For more information regarding love-feasts, see Frank Baker, *Methodism and the Love-Feast* (London, UK: Epworth Press, 1957).

⁷⁴ June 3, November 8, November 20, December 5, and December 10 of 1738 (see these dates in Wesley, *Works*, vols. 19). Note the large gap in dates between June 3 and November 8, 1738.

“but after I had prayed, faintly, as I could, the temptation vanished away.”⁷⁵ No other potential supernatural events occurred until November 8 when Wesley and his brother Charles visited a man condemned to death. John writes, “It was the most glorious instance I ever saw of faith triumphing over sin and death. ... A few moments before he died ... he calmly replied, ‘I feel a peace which I could not have believed to be possible. And I know it is the peace of God which passeth all understanding.’”⁷⁶ On December 10 as Wesley preached, “the great power of God was with us, and one who had been in despair several years received a witness that she was a child of God.”⁷⁷

The other two events in this timeframe fall more in line with signs and wonders supernatural events. The most traumatic event is a supernatural dream, which may even be considered a spiritual failure on Wesley’s part. On the night of November 20, 1738 Wesley “was greatly troubled in dreams” and “waked in an unaccountable consternation” and was unable to return to sleep. He later learned that in a nearby lodge, at about that same time, a to-be student of Wesley’s tried to shoot himself with a pistol. The gun did not go off. However, an hour later, the man returned with a fresh prime for the gun and proceeded to shoot himself.⁷⁸ Was Wesley awakened by God in order to pray for the man or even to prevent his suicide? This is an unanswerable question.

The second event involves supernatural deliverance. On December 5, 1738 Wesley writes about a young woman he encountered who was “raving mad, screaming and tormenting herself continually.” Wesley went to speak with her and records, “The

⁷⁵ Wesley, “June 3, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 18, 253.

⁷⁶ Wesley, “November 8, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 19, 20-1.

⁷⁷ Wesley, “December 10, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 19, 27.

⁷⁸ Wesley, “November 20, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 19, 21.

moment I began she was still. The tears ran down her cheeks all the time I was telling her, ‘Jesus of Nazareth is able and willing to deliver you.’” That Wesley believed this was a demonic attack is revealed through his language of deliverance and as he reflects, “O where is faith upon earth? Why are these poor wretches left under the open bondage of Satan? Jesus, master! Give thou medicine to heal their sickness and deliver those who are now also vexed with unclean spirits!”⁷⁹ Although she was calmed, Wesley’s statement leaves the reader wondering if she was truly delivered from bondage.

Thus, of the five potential occurrences recorded by Wesley between Aldersgate and Fetter Lane, only two are categorized as supernatural signs and wonders: the dream of November 20 and the deliverance of December 5. Neither one of these two events is a clear spiritual victory as Wesley did not respond to the dream and it is not clear that the woman was truly delivered from the demonic attack. The conclusion from this analysis is that very few supernatural signs and wonders occurred in Wesley’s life in the seven months following Aldersgate.

Of note during this timeframe, on October 9, Wesley read about manifestations of the Holy Spirit in a tract by Jonathan Edwards. Wesley was referring to the famous revival tract *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northhampton*, edited by Isaac Watts and published in 1737.⁸⁰ Wesley wrote about these events: “Surely ‘this is the Lord’s doing and it is marvelous in our eyes’!”⁸¹ Heitzenrater surmises, “In this work [Wesley] could plainly see the influence of the Holy Spirit in the revivals of New England. ... It set the stage for his

⁷⁹ Wesley, “December 5, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 19, 23.

⁸⁰ See footnote 50 in Wesley, *Works*, vol. 19, 16.

⁸¹ Wesley, “October 8, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 19, 16.

understanding of the movement of the Spirit among the people.”⁸² It may have also increased Wesley’s expectation of supernatural signs and wonders.

John Wesley After Fetter Lane (January 1, 1739)

The Events on January 1, 1739

A little more than seven months after his Aldersgate experience, Wesley gathered with others on January 1, 1739 for a love-feast at Fetter Lane. He records the event as follows:

Mr. Hall, Kinchin, Ingham, Whitefield, Hutchings, and my brother Charles⁸³ were present at our love-feast in Fetter Lane, with about sixty of our brethren. About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his majesty, we broke out with one voice, ‘We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.’⁸⁴

Wesley recognized the manifest power of the Holy Spirit that night in January. When the Fetter Lane society was going through difficulties between the Moravians and the Methodists, they met on June 16, 1739 to confess their unfaithfulness and divisions, “one saying, I am of Paul, another, I am of Apollos.” Wesley writes:

In that hour we found God with us as at the first. Some fell prostrate upon the ground. Others burst out, as with one consent, into loud praise and thanksgiving.

⁸² Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 86.

⁸³ These individuals have been identified as Rev. Wesley Hall, Rev. Charles Kinchin, Rev. Benjamin Ingham, Rev. George Whitefield, Jon Hutchings, and Charles Wesley, respectively. See footnotes in Wesley, *Works*, vol. 19, 29.

⁸⁴ Wesley, “January 1, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 29.

And many openly testified, there had been no such day as this since January the first preceding.⁸⁵

George Whitefield, who was twenty-four at the time, wrote regarding the Fetter Lane meetings that occurred around January 1, 1739:

It was a Pentecostal season indeed. Some times [sic] whole nights were spent in prayer. Often have we been filled as with new wine. And often have I seen them overwhelmed with the Divine Presence, and cry-out, ‘Will God, indeed, dwell with men upon earth! How dreadful is this place! This is no other than the house of God, and the gate of Heaven!’⁸⁶

In his seminal work, *A History of the Moravian Church*, James E. Hutton, recognized the importance of the January 1 love-feast. Writing in 1909, Hutton describes the Fetter Lane service as when “the fervor reached its height.”⁸⁷ However, this view was not universally accepted by other Wesleyan historians. John Wesley’s journal “selected and edited” by Percy Livingstone Parker into a single volume was originally printed in 1903⁸⁸. Parker’s selective editing does not even include the January 1, 1739 entry. I was introduced to John Wesley’s journal through *The Heart of Wesley’s Journal* and have a well-marked and dog-eared copy on my shelf. Subsequently I was not exposed to John Wesley’s Pentecostal experience of January 1, 1739 nor to any supernatural events of

⁸⁵ Wesley, “June 16, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 70-71. “January the first preceding” is a clear reference to the January 1, 1739 Pentecostal event.

⁸⁶ John Gillies, *Memoirs of the Life of the Reverend George Whitefield, M.A.* (London, UK: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1772), footnote (a) 34. Gillies is quoting Whitefield in this oft-referenced passage, but the original source of this quote is unknown. Gillies simply refers to this with the annotation “MS.” Indicating it is from a manuscript of Whitefield’s.

⁸⁷ James E. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Church* (London, UK: Moravian Publication Office, 1909), 295.

⁸⁸ John Wesley, *John Wesley’s Journal*, ed. Percy Livingstone Parker (London, UK: Isbister and Co., 1903). This text was reprinted by Moody Bible Institute of Chicago in 1951 as *The Journal of John Wesley*, ed. Percy Livingstone Parker (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1951). It was reprinted again in 1989 under the title *The Heart of Wesley’s Journal*, ed. Percy Livingstone Parker (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1989).

1739 that occurred while Wesley was preaching⁸⁹, even though this text purported to be the “heart” of Wesley’s journal!⁹⁰

The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. edited by Nehemiah Curnock and first published in 1911 has an interesting take on the events of January 1, 1739. As a footnote to the phrase “many fell to the ground,” Curnock includes a drawing of a Moravian service showing an orderly “feet-washing” and a “prostration before the Lord.” Even though Curnock notes that “not a single Moravian minister” attended the January 1 meeting, he still implies that “fell to the ground” must actually be a planned prostration as would occur in a Moravian service.⁹¹ Curnock seems to downplay the Pentecostal-like manifestation of the Holy Spirit in deference to a more organized response of worshipers. As will be shown, a reading of Wesley’s journal in the months following the January 1 Fetter Lane love-feast reveals many occurrences of people disorderly falling to the ground.

⁸⁹ Parker includes only two “supernatural occurrences” from Wesley’s journal during the seven months following January 1, 1739. One was the March 5, 1739 event concerning a “young woman, raving mad, screaming and tormenting herself continually” who became still the moment Wesley spoke to her. The other was the remarkable event where George Whitefield, who had questioned the outward signs, saw “four persons sunk down close to him, almost in the same moment” while he was preaching. See Wesley, *Heart*, ed. Parker, 46, 58.

⁹⁰ Two Journal passages that Parker includes in his edited version have warnings concerning outward signs. The first is Wesley’s response to those who warned him “not to regard visions or dreams, or to fancy people had remission of sins because of their cries, or tears, or bare outward professions.” Wesley defends the signs since he has seen “very many persons changed in a moment” and that he knew “several persons in whom this great change was wrought in a dream, or during a strong representation to the eye of their mind, of Christ either on the cross or in glory” (Wesley, *Heart*, ed. Parker, 51). The second passage is from November 25, 1759 where Wesley warns of the danger of regarding “extraordinary circumstances too much, such as outcries, convulsions, visions, trances; as if these were essential to the inward work so that it could not go on without them” and the danger of regarding “them too little” to condemn them altogether; to imagine they had nothing of God in them, and were a hindrance to his work” (Wesley, *Heart*, ed. Parker, 264).

⁹¹ Nehemiah Curnock, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., Volume II*, ed. Nehemiah Curnock (London, UK: The Epworth Press, 1938), footnote 1, 122-3.

Even though chapter 3 of Heitzenrater's *Wesley and the People Called Methodist* is titled, "The Revival Begins (1739–1744)," he does not include the Fetter Lane event. Instead, the revival begins, according to Heitzenrater, with the request of Whitefield in late March 1739 for Wesley to join him field-preaching in Bristol.⁹² Fortunately, other modern historians are more willing to discuss the January 1 event. Henry D. Rack, at the time the Bishop Fraser Senior Lecturer in Ecclesiastical History Emeritus in the University of Manchester, describes how "Wesley himself was caught up in a scene at Fetter Lane reminiscent of the day of Pentecost."⁹³ Dr. Frank H. Billman, adjunct professor in supernatural ministry at United Theological Seminary, includes the New Year's Day event as the first of a series of events showing the "manifestations of the presence and power of God ... in Wesley's ministry."⁹⁴

The Early Angst Following Wesley's "Pentecost" Experience

There seems to be no apparent change in Wesley immediately following the outpouring of the Spirit on January 1. In fact, the angst that was noted above after Aldersgate appears again. Wesley's first journal entry following January 1, 1739 was written on January 4. Wesley refers to this entry as a "Prayer, writ account of myself"⁹⁵ and begins with "One who had had the form of godliness many years ago wrote the following reflections." These reflections include phrases such as: "I affirm, I am not a

⁹² Heitzenrater, *Wesley*, 97-8.

⁹³ Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*.

⁹⁴ Frank H. Billman, *The Supernatural Thread in Methodism: Signs and Wonders Among Methodist Then and Now* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House Press, 2013), 25-6.

⁹⁵ See footnote 29 in Wesley, *Works*, vol. 19, 29.

Christian now,” “A Christian is one who has the fruits of the Spirit of Christ, which (to mention no more) are love, peace, joy. But these I have not,” “I *feel* this moment I do not love God; which therefore I *know*, because I *feel* it,” and “joy in the Holy Ghost I have not.”⁹⁶ Wesley’s spiritual depression that followed his Aldersgate experience seems to continue following his Pentecost experience. However, unlike after Aldersgate, his spiritual angst is very short-lived. In contrast to the multiple entries in the months following Aldersgate, journal entries that reveal Wesley’s spiritual struggles after January 1, 1739 cease after a single such entry on January 4.

Supernatural Occurrences in the First Seven Months After January 1, 1739

Shortly after Fetter Lane, on January 21, Wesley saw the first of what would become many dramatic supernatural responses to his preaching:

We were greatly surprised in the evening while I was expounding in the Minories. A well-dressed, middle-aged woman suddenly cried out as in the agonies of death. She continued so to do for some time, with all the signs of the sharpest anguish of spirit. When she was a little recovered I desired her to call upon me the next day. She then told me that about three years before, she was under strong convictions of sin and in such terror of mind that she had no comfort in anything, nor any rest, day or night; that she sent for the minister of her parish and told him the distress she was in; upon which he told her husband she was stark mad and advised him to send for a physician immediately. A physician was sent for accordingly, who ordered her to be blooded, blistered, and so on. But this did not heal her wounded spirit. So that she continued much as she was before, till the last night he whose word she at first found to be ‘sharper than any two-edged sword’ gave her a faint hope that he would undertake her cause and heal the soul which had sinned against him.⁹⁷

Note that this response occurred more than one month prior to April 2, 1739 when Wesley began field preaching.

⁹⁶ Wesley, “January 4, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 29-30.

⁹⁷ Wesley, “January 21, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 32.

Such supernatural encounters would become one of the distinguishing marks of the Methodist Revival. Prior to Aldersgate there are very few supernatural occurrences recorded by Wesley. In the approximately seven months following Aldersgate, there were two occurrences of supernatural signs and wonders. In stark contrast, during the first seven months following January 1, 1739, there are no less than thirty-one supernatural occurrences, beginning with the event on January 21 noted above. “Appendix A: Supernatural Occurrences in John Wesley’s Journal During the Seven Months After Aldersgate (May 24, 1738) and During the Seven Months After Fetter Lane (January 1, 1739)” contains the journal entries of each of these supernatural occurrences.

The thirty-one supernatural occurrences in the first seven months of 1739 include Wesley’s encounter with a French prophetess in which he even questions the veracity of the experience: “Two or three of our company were much affected, and believed she spoke by the Spirit of God. But this was in no wise clear to me. The motion might be either hysterical or artificial.”⁹⁸ This event shows that Wesley was thoughtful and even skeptical regarding the outward signs and wonders of supernatural occurrences. However, he was never so skeptical so as to categorically deny the workings of the Holy Spirit. On April 17, 1739 Wesley witnesses “one that stood by (to our no small surprise) cried out aloud, with utmost vehemence, even as in the agonies of death. But we continue in prayer, till ‘a new song was put in her mouth.’” After two others had a similar response, Wesley summarizes, “So many living witnesses hath God given that ‘his hand is *still*

⁹⁸ Wesley, “January 28, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 33.

stretched out to heal, and that signs and wonders are even *now* wrought by his holy child Jesus’.”⁹⁹

Even persons who were vehemently opposed to these outpourings of the Holy Spirit during Wesley’s teaching and preaching could be dramatically affected. “One of the most surprising instances of his power” was with a woman who was “enraged at ‘this new way’ and zealous in opposing it.” When she agreed to pray with Wesley, “she fell into an extreme agony, both of body and soul, and soon after cried out ..., ‘Now I know, I am forgiven for Christ’s sake’.”¹⁰⁰

Even George Whitefield had objections to “those outward signs which had so often accompanied the inward work of God.” The day after discussing these objections with Wesley, Wesley wrote in his journal that Whitefield “had an opportunity of informing himself better. For no sooner had he begun ... to invite all sinners to believe in Christ, than four persons sunk down close to him, almost in the same moment.” Even more remarkable was that each of the four had a different experience: the first lay without motion, the second trembled exceedingly, the third had strong convulsions and only groaned, and the fourth convulsed with strong cries and tears. Whitefield was able to witness for himself at once four different manifestations of the Spirit to which he had previously objected. As Wesley summarized, “From this time, I trust, we shall all suffer God to carry on his own work in the way that pleaseth him.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Wesley, “April 17, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 49.

¹⁰⁰ Wesley, “March 2, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 35. For other instances in this timeframe affecting those who had objections or who were skeptical of these outward signs see March 8, April 30, May 1, May 2, July 1, and July 30 of 1739 (see these dates in Wesley, *Works*, vol. 19).

¹⁰¹ Wesley, “July 7, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 78-9.

During just the first seven months of 1739 there were many other similar manifestations of the work of the Spirit in people.¹⁰² On one of these days, June 15, Wesley observed:

Some sank down and there remained not strength in them; others exceedingly trembled and quaked; some were torn with a kind of convulsive motion in every part of their bodies, and that so violently that often four or five persons could not hold one of them. I have seen many hysterical and many epileptic fits, but none of them were like these, in many respects. I immediately prayed that God would not suffer those who were weak to be offended.¹⁰³

Wesley was aware that some would explain away the spiritual phenomenon as natural physical conditions such as hysteria and epilepsy. He was convinced by observation that this was not the case.

In addition to physical manifestations of the Spirit in those hearing Wesley preach, there were other types of supernatural occurrences. Between February 9 and February 17 Wesley reported the (partial) healing of an eleven-year-old boy who “runs about beating and tearing himself,” bites, pinches, and “lays his hands on the fire and sticks pins in his flesh.” Wesley reports that “a few of us prayed with him, and from that time (as his parents since informed us) he had more rest (although not a full deliverance) than he had had for two years before.”¹⁰⁴ On April 15, while it rained hard in Bristol, not a drop fell less than three miles away in Rose Green where Wesley preached to about five thousand.¹⁰⁵ On April 29, after delivering five sermons at five different locations and participating in a love-feast at another place, Wesley exclaimed, “O how has God

¹⁰² April 18, April 21, April 23, April 26, April 27, May 1, May 2, May 9, May 16, May 19, May 20, June 15, June 16, June 22, June 23, June 30, and July 1 of 1739 (see these dates in Wesley, *Works*, vol. 19).

¹⁰³ Wesley, “June 15, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 72.

¹⁰⁴ Wesley, “February 9, 13, and 17, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 34.

¹⁰⁵ Wesley, “April 15, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 48.

renewed my strength! Who used ten years ago to be faint and weary with preaching *twice* in *one* day!”¹⁰⁶

On May 2 and May 21, Wesley conducted what could be described as exorcisms. In the first instance, John Haydon fell raving mad at home and “then roared out, ‘O thou devil! Thou cursed devil! Yea, thou legions of devils! Thou canst stay. Christ will cast thee out. I know his work is begun. Tear me to pieces, if thou wilt, but thou canst not hurt me.’” Wesley and others “betook ourselves to prayer” and “both his body and soul were set at liberty.”¹⁰⁷ In the second instance, Thomas Maxfield “began to roar out and beat himself against the ground, so that six men could scarcely hold him. ... Except J[oh]n H[aydo]n, I never saw one so torn of the evil one.” Again after they continued in prayer “the greater part found rest to their souls.”¹⁰⁸

The outward signs of the revival were numerous, so much so that they became a point of contention regarding their validity. Wesley wrote on May 20, 1739: “During this whole time I was almost continually asked ... concerning this strange work ..., ‘How can these things be?’ and innumerable cautions were given me (generally grounded on gross misrepresentations of things) not to regard visions or dreams; or to fancy people had remission of sins because of their cries or tears, or bare outward professions.”¹⁰⁹ He responded in letter form, which he includes his journal:

You deny that God does *now* work *these* effects; at least, that he works them in *this* manner. I affirm both, because I have heard these things with my own ears and seen them with my eyes. I have seen (as far as a thing of this kind can be

¹⁰⁶ Wesley, “April 27, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 52.

¹⁰⁷ Wesley, “May 2, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 54-5.

¹⁰⁸ Wesley, “May 21, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 61.

¹⁰⁹ Wesley, “May 20, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 59.

seen) very many persons changed in a moment from the spirit of fear, horror, despair, to the spirit of love, joy, and peace; and from sinful desires till then reigning over them to a pure desire of doing the will of God. These are matters of fact, whereof I have been, and almost daily am, an eye- or ear-witness.¹¹⁰

He continues to write in this letter regarding visions and dreams: “I know several persons in whom this great change was wrought, in a dream, or during a strong representation to the eye of their mind, of Christ either on the cross or in glory.”¹¹¹

Up until this time, May 20, 1739, most of the outward manifestations occurred privately or in society meetings. Those that did not believe in these “signs and wonders,” as Wesley stated he must term them,¹¹² “could not *deny* the facts, but they could *explain* them away” saying that people fainted because the rooms were too warm or that it was all a cheat. ‘Why were they not done in the face of the sun?’ they asked.¹¹³ This question was answered by God in a dramatic way the very next day. On May 21, 1739 at an open air meeting with more than two thousand present, “one and another and another was struck to the earth, exceedingly trembling at the presence of his power.”¹¹⁴ By the end of the day, twenty-nine “had their heaviness turned into joy this day.”¹¹⁵ Although certain not to completely persuade all those who opposed, the openness of these manifestations weakened at least one of the arguments against the signs and wonders.

¹¹⁰ Wesley, “May 20, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 59.

¹¹¹ Wesley, “May 20, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 59.

¹¹² Wesley, “May 20, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 60.

¹¹³ Wesley, “May 20, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 60.

¹¹⁴ Wesley, “May 20, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 60-62. Wesley added the date “Monday 21,” presumably May 21, 1739 considering the context, in his edit of the journal in 1748. See note 98 in Wesley, *Works*, vol. 19, 60.

¹¹⁵ Wesley, “May 20, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 62. Again this text is included in the journal entry for May 20, but Wesley added “Monday 21” before the events of the open air meeting.

Subsequent Holy Spirit Encounters Following the Seven Months After January 1, 1739

To present a fair comparison, supernatural occurrences in the seven months following Aldersgate (May 24, 1738 to December 31, 1738) were compared to the seven months following the Pentecost event of the love-feast (January 1, 1739 to July 31, 1739). From a true historical point-of-view, July 31, 1739 is rather arbitrary in that the signs and wonders of the Methodist Revival did not change in form or frequency on this date.¹¹⁶ In fact, signs and wonders became associated with the movement.

For instance, Philip Henry Molther, a young member of the Brethren Church who stopped at the Fetter Lane Society on the way to America from Germany, said this on October 18, 1739 about the Society meetings: “The first time I entered the meeting I was alarmed and almost terror-stricken at hearing their sighing and groaning, their whining and howling, which strange proceeding they call the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”¹¹⁷ In response, Molther and other Brethren turn to a quietist approach where Scripture reading, verbal prayers, teachings, and Holy Communion were not to be practiced until a person was moved by God into a saving relationship. Wesley was vehemently opposed to this approach and even declared that Satan was beginning to rule in the Society.¹¹⁸ The Society split and the Methodist movement moved on without the limitations of the quietism of the Moravians.

¹¹⁶ Jennings, for instance, describes supernatural occurrences on the following dates in the last half of 1739: October 12, September 28, October 25, October 27, and November 28 (see Jennings, *Supernatural Occurrences*, 46, 50, 79, 79, 101).

¹¹⁷ As quoted in Hutton, *Moravian Church*, 296.

¹¹⁸ Hutton, *Moravian Church*, 298.

Wesley's Defense Against Charges of "Enthusiasm"

On February 9, 1739, Wesley defended the inward workings of the Holy Spirit in "The Preface" to *An Abstract of the Life and Death of the Reverend, Learned, and Pious Mr. Tho[mas] Halyburton*.¹¹⁹ Wesley writes, "Neither be ye offended when ye hear the wisdom of the world pronounce all this mere enthusiasm. ... [If] you are yet a natural man ... you cannot discern the things of the Spirit of God. They are enthusiasm, madness, foolishness, to you, for they are spiritually discerned."¹²⁰ Wesley defended the inner workings of the Spirit against charges of "enthusiasm" right when the external signs and wonders of the Holy Spirit were just beginning to become manifest in the revival.

Wesley wrote "The Preface" to the publication *An Extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Journal from August 12, 1738 to Nov. 1, 1739*¹²¹, which is a defense of "what it is the Methodists (so called) have done and are doing now—or rather, what it is that God hath done and is still doing in our land. For it is not the work of man which hath lately

¹¹⁹ Editors Paul Wesley Chilcote and Kenneth J. Collins of the *Doctrinal and Controversial Treatises* volumes of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, write in their introductory comments to "The Preface" that Wesley had been introduced to the *Memoirs of the Life of the Reverend, Learned, and Pious Mr. Thomas Halyburton* during his mission to Georgia. Wesley began preparing a shortened version of this book and began writing "The Preface" in late December 1738, with the final version dated February 9, 1739. See Wesley, "Preface to An Abstract of the Life and Death of ... Thomas Halyburton," *Works*, vol. 13, 26.

¹²⁰ Wesley, "The Preface" to "An Abstract of the Life and Death of the Reverend, Learned, and Pious Mr. Tho[mas] Halyburton" [February 9, 1739], *Works*, vol. 13, 30.

¹²¹ Originally printed in Bristol in 1742. See the reprint of the original cover page of this publication as contained in Wesley, *Works*, vol. 19, 1. W. Reginald Ward, editor of the journal portion of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, writes in a footnote to Wesley's "The Preface" that it is "probably right ... to suppose J[ohn]W[esley] meant the preface to stand before the entry for Sept[ember] 17, 1738," but that is was moved to before August 12, 1738 for printing/publication reasons (footnote 1 in Wesley, *Works*, vol. 19, 2).

appeared. All who calmly observe it must say, ‘This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.’”¹²² He further writes,

The manner wherein God hath wrought this work is as strange as the work itself. In any particular soul it has generally, if not always, been wrought in one moment. ‘As the lightning shining from heaven’, so was ‘the coming of the Son of man’, either to bring peace or a sword; either to wound or to heal, either to convince of sin or to give remission of sins in his blood. And the other circumstances attending it have been equally remote from what human wisdom would have expected. So true is that word, ‘My ways are not as your ways, nor my thoughts as your thoughts.’ ... These extraordinary circumstances seem to have been designed by God for the further manifestation of his work, to cause his power to be known, and to awaken the attention of a drowsy world.¹²³

Wesley’s Cautionary Note on Supernatural Occurrences

Supernatural occurrences were certainly a large part of the Wesley revival, especially in the first few months after January 1, 1739, as noted in this chapter. However, Wesley was a man of Word and Spirit. The miraculous must always be evaluated in light of what Scripture teaches. On July 31, 1739, Wesley included in his journal a letter written by Rev. Josiah Tucker of which Wesley says, “[I] often wished that all calm and impartial men would consider what is advanced ... in a little discourse concerning enthusiasm or religious delusion.” Tucker proposed rules to be observed. The first rule is a warning “Not to *blame* persons for doing that now, which Scripture records *holy men* of old to have practiced, lest had they lived in those times they should have condemned them also.” The fifth rule states, “Not to establish the power of *working miracles* as the great criterion of a divine mission, when Scripture teaches us that the agreement of doctrines with truth as taught in those Scriptures is the only infallible

¹²² Wesley, “The Preface [1742],” *Works*, vol. 19, 3.

¹²³ Wesley, “The Preface [1742],” *Works*, vol. 19, 3-4.

rule.”¹²⁴ Thus supernatural occurrences are to be welcomed, but not as the primary goal and never contrary to Scripture.

Wesleyan scholar Randy Maddox and editor of *Aldersgate Reconsidered* summarizes an essay by David Lowes Watson as follows: “While Wesley viewed the gift of the inner witness of the Spirit (which he received at Aldersgate) as the *power* of Christian discipleship, he consistently stressed the *form* of disciplined Christian life as the source and nurturer of this power. You cannot have the power without the form.”¹²⁵ Maddox continues the summary by saying that “if contemporary Wesleyans have lost the *power*, it is not because we need to seek more ‘experiences,’ but because we have discarded Wesley’s spiritual guidelines and disciplines.”¹²⁶

The supernatural work of the Holy Spirit was important to the spread of the Methodist Revival. However, signs and wonders were never meant to be an end. On January 17, 1739, right at the beginning of the movement of God, Wesley wrote:

I was with two persons who I doubt are properly *enthusiasts*. For, first, they think to attain the end without the means, which is *enthusiasm*, properly so called. Again, they think themselves inspired by God, and are not. But false, imaginary inspiration is *enthusiasm*. That theirs is only imaginary inspiration appears hence: it contradicts the law and the testimony.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Wesley, “July 31, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 86-87.

¹²⁵ Randy Maddox, “Introduction,” *Aldersgate Reconsidered*, ed. Randy Maddox (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1990), 15, summarizing from the same book David Lowes Watson, “Aldersgate Street and the *General Rules*: The Form and the Power of Methodist Discipleship,” 33-48.

¹²⁶ Maddox, “Introduction,” 15.

¹²⁷ Wesley, “January 17, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 31-2.

The proper work of God is revealed in Word and Power. Wesley famously considered himself *homo unius libri* (“a man of one book”), which he called the “Book of God.”¹²⁸ After his Holy Spirit encounter at the Fetter Lane Society meeting on January 1, 1739, Wesley also sought for the power of God to be manifest. For instance, on April 17, 1739, Wesley writes, I went to Baldwin Street and expounded ... the fourth chapter of the Acts. We then called upon God to confirm his word.”¹²⁹ Both Word and Power were necessary for the Methodist Revival, and both were sought after by Wesley.

Conclusion

The Aldersgate experience on May 24, 1738 where John Wesley’s heart was strangely warmed is rightly celebrated in the history of Methodism. It is a matter of current debate as to whether Wesley became a Christian for the first time, received assurance of his salvation, or had a significant spiritual encounter among others in his journey of faith. This chapter in no way offers to diminish the importance of Aldersgate nor offer a definitive explanation of this event. This chapter instead elevates the often forgotten Pentecostal event of January 1, 1739 where Wesley proclaims that “the power of God came mightily upon us.”¹³⁰

Prior to Aldersgate, Wesley was a hard-working clergyman with a fair share of successful ministry both in England and America. However, there is little evidence of the

¹²⁸ Wesley, “Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions,” *Works*, vol. 1, 105.

¹²⁹ Wesley, “April 17, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 49. Wesley then begins to describe the signs and wonders that occurred concluding: “So many living witnesses hath God given that ‘his hand is *still* stretched out to heal, and that signs and wonders are even *now* wrought by his holy child Jesus’.”

¹³⁰ Wesley, “January 1, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 29.

supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in his life and ministry as evidenced by the lack of supernatural occurrences in Wesley's journal. This did not change much in the months after Aldersgate.

In the approximately seven months between Aldersgate and January 1, 1739 there are only two "signs and wonders" supernatural occurrences recorded by Wesley. The first involves Wesley being awakened by troubling dreams around the time a would-be student of his was committing suicide.¹³¹ The second is a potential exorcism in which a raving mad woman becomes still the moment Wesley began to speak with her.¹³² Neither of these two occurrences resulted in a clear spiritual victory. Also important is that during the seven months following May 24, 1738, Wesley continued to write often about his spiritual depression and angst. Even though the Aldersgate experience was when Wesley wrote (at least initially) that he had finally found faith in Christ, he continued to write about heaviness of soul (May 26), want of joy (May 27), soreness of heart (June 6), his weak mind (June 7), not having love of God or of Christ (October 14), being doubtful of his own state (October 27), and being troubled (November 23).¹³³

In direct comparison, the same seventh month length of time following the Pentecostal event of January 1, 1739 saw at least thirty-one supernatural occurrences, many involving multiple people. These occurrences were much stronger evidence of signs and wonders than those events that occurred in 1738 after Aldersgate. Starting with the January 1 event where "many fell to the ground," there were multiple instances of people being overcome by the Holy Spirit. People fell to the ground, cried out with strong

¹³¹ Wesley, "November 20, 1738," *Works*, vol. 19, 21.

¹³² Wesley, "December 5, 1738," *Works*, vol. 19, 23

¹³³ See the respective dates of 1738 in Wesley, *Works*, vols. 18 and 19.

pain¹³⁴ or as if “pierced by a sword,”¹³⁵ violently trembled¹³⁶, and showed other visible signs of the Spirit’s work in them. A number of these physical manifestations occurred in people who were in opposition to these types of supernatural events. In this time period there was a (partial) physical healing of a boy,¹³⁷ two exorcisms,¹³⁸ and a miraculous save from a dangerous horse accident.¹³⁹ In addition, within a few days of January 1, 1739, evidence of Wesley’s spiritual depression and angst disappeared.

Clearly something was spiritually happening following January 1, 1739 that was not as apparent following Aldersgate. After Fetter Lane, supernatural work of the Holy Spirit became common place and Wesley’s spiritual angst was gone. Thus, it was in 1739, after the supernatural move of the Holy Spirit in John Wesley’s life and his ministry, that the Methodist Revival that swept the world started.

Wesley’s hard work and achievements prior to 1738-39 would not be as undervalued as they are except for the remarkable movement of Methodism beginning with these remarkable two years. Wesley had achieved as much or more than any typical clergy person would hope to achieve in the first thirty-five years of their life. Yet, with the work of the Holy Spirit, so much more is possible, as seen in Wesley’s life.

Methodist clergy in particular can fall into the trap of working hard for God rather than relying on God to work hard for them. For instance, in the “Historic Examination for

¹³⁴ Wesley, “April 17, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 49.

¹³⁵ Wesley, “March 2, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 35.

¹³⁶ Wesley, “April 21, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 50.

¹³⁷ Wesley, “February 9-17, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 34.

¹³⁸ Wesley, *Works*, vol. 19, “May 2, 1739,” 54-5 and “May 21, 1739,” 60-2.

¹³⁹ Wesley, “June 24, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 73-4.

Admission into Full Connection,” each person seeking admission into full membership as an ordained Elder in The United Methodist Church is asked before the entire annual conference:

19. Will you observe the following directions?

a) Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Never trifle away time; neither spend any more time at any one place than is strictly necessary.

b) Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. ...¹⁴⁰

Even though there is also a question, “Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and his work?” there are no questions regarding being Spirit-led.¹⁴¹

Pastor and evangelist Daniel Jennings concludes his summary of the supernatural occurrences in John Wesley’s ministry as follows:

While much ministry is being done the world over and much of it in the name of John Wesley, we have forgotten his ways and teachings and have began [sic] to focus on doing ministry in our own strength. We are very quick to explain away the operations of the devil and content to sit back with no real conviction flowing out of our ministries. We believe God *can* move in a mighty way in our service and outreach attempts but we don’t *expect* Him to.¹⁴²

Maybe a final look into Wesley’s journal of 1739 may help to understand the power of the Holy Spirit in comparison to the weakness of the individual. In March 1739

¹⁴⁰ “Admission and Continuance of Full Membership in the Annual Conference,” ¶336, *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016), 270.

¹⁴¹ Billman points out that this was not always the case. Through the 1964 *Book of Discipline*, potential candidates for ministry were those “who profess to be moved by the Holy Spirit to preach.” There were even interview questions asking the candidates how the Holy Spirit moved them and how they expect the Holy Spirit to help them in their ministry. Starting with the 1968 *Book of Discipline*, the candidates are those “called by God and set apart by the Church for the specialized ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Order,” with the reference to the Holy Spirit removed. (see Billman, *Supernatural*, 99-100.)

¹⁴² Jennings, *The Supernatural*, 216.

George Whitefield asked Wesley to travel to Bristol without delay¹⁴³ to preach outside the walls of the church. Wesley struggled to accept this request and included in his journal entry of March 28, 1739 a letter to his father dated December 10, 1734 which describes why Wesley “preferred for so many years an university life before any other.”¹⁴⁴ In this letter, Wesley responds to his father’s promise that parish life in Epworth is “a larger sphere of action” than the university: “There I should ‘have the care of two thousand souls.’ Two thousand souls! I see not how it is possible for such a one as me to take care of one hundred.”¹⁴⁵ Wesley left London the next day on March 29 and gave his first field preaching sermon on April 1¹⁴⁶. On April 2, Wesley “submitted to ‘be more vile,’ and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation ... to about three thousand people.”¹⁴⁷ Wesley turned down two thousand souls because he was not sure he could serve one hundred souls; three months after his encounter with the Holy Spirit Wesley was preaching to three thousand souls!¹⁴⁸

Maybe we have come to the time when the popular opinion of Methodism will change from a declining mainline denomination that does some good works to a Spirit-led movement. In *Adam Bede*, written in 1859, novelist George Eliot captures the general

¹⁴³ Wesley, “March 15, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 37. The letter that Wesley received from Whitefield with this request was written on March 22 and 23, 1739 (see footnote 63 in Wesley, *Works*, vol. 19, 37).

¹⁴⁴ Wesley, “March 28, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 38.

¹⁴⁵ Wesley, “March 28, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 42.

¹⁴⁶ Wesley, “April 1, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 46.

¹⁴⁷ Wesley, “April 2, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 46.

¹⁴⁸ Interestingly, the Scripture Wesley used during his sermon to the three thousand was from Luke 4:18-19 which Wesley quotes: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” See Wesley, “April 2, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 46.

public opinion that “to my readers Methodism may mean nothing more than low-pitched gables up dingy streets, sleek grocers, sponging preachers and hypocritical jargon—elements which are regarded as an exhaustive analysis of Methodism in many fashionable quarters.” However, Eliot goes on to describe the characters Seth and Dinah as Methodists “of a very old-fashioned kind. They believed in present miracles, in instantaneous conversions, and in revelations by dreams and visions.”¹⁴⁹ It is time for us to once again be Methodists of a very old-fashioned kind!

To this end, W&P is meant to usher in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit into a “typical” hard-working pastor and hard-working church. Just like Wesley prior to Aldersgate, a pastor and a local church can point to successes. Certainly the power of Aldersgate, which for sake of argument includes salvation in Christ and assurance of faith, is necessary. Even if a pastor and many in the congregation have accepted Christ and have assurance of faith, they can still lack the Pentecostal power that was shown forth in Wesley and his ministry starting with January 1, 1739.

Like with the Methodist Revival and the New Testament Pentecost of Acts 2, the Pentecostal moment occurs first in the leaders. John Wesley received his on January 1, 1739 at an overnight love-feast at Fetter Lane. The disciples “received power when the Holy Spirit came upon them” (Acts 1:8) as the Spirit descended upon them in the upper room (Acts 2:1-12). After these events, the revivals continued through the leaders as the Holy Spirit continued to show forth with signs and wonders. Following these models, the leaders of W&P must receive (or remember) their Pentecostal moments and then let the

¹⁴⁹ George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996), 38. Referred to in Robert Webster, *Methodism and the Miraculous: John Wesley's Idea of the Supernatural and the Identification of Methodists in the Eighteenth Century* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2013), 133.

Holy Spirit continue to work signs and wonders. The supernatural work of the Holy Spirit must be fully welcomed into church leadership and the church for revival.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

“Word and Power” is designed to increase understanding, practice, and ministry, in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. To be fair, DBS also gives some recognition to the importance of the Holy Spirit in approaching Scripture. However, the power of God in the work of the Holy Spirit is not emphasized and displays of supernatural workings of God in DBS participants are rarely encouraged or discussed. The “Implementation Guide” of DBS does state: “The promise is that all who come to Scripture allowing it to have its say will, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, experience a power that changes priorities and redirect lives.”¹ The “Implementation Guide” has one other mention of the work of the Holy Spirit: “Like a basket holding the loaves for a meal, DISCIPLE offers Scripture for the nourishment of the hungry always undergirded by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.”² The “Implementation Guide,” however, is rarely practically used in the church and is really only helpful for starting the first class of DBS or to give an overview of the other years of the *Disciple* curriculum program.³ The “Implementation Guide” is not read by the participants of DBS and is not required to be

¹ Mark Price, *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study, Implementation Guide*, revised (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 3.

² Price, *Disciple: Implementation Guide*, 4.

³ The studies in the *Disciple* series are in typical year order: (1) *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study*, (2) *Disciple: Into the Word Into the World*, (3) *Disciple: Remember Who You Are*, (4) *Disciple: Under the Tree of Life*, and (5) *Christian Believer: Knowing God with Heart and Mind*.

read by the facilitator of the study. Therefore, this statement in the “Implementation Guide” would likely not be read by those participating in the DBS study.

Each student in DBS is given a “Study Manual” that they will use throughout the course. In the “Study Manual” section titled, “As You Begin Disciple,” the participant is encouraged to “Trust the Holy Spirit to instruct you and to empower you through Scripture.”⁴ In this same “Study Manual” section there is an interesting paragraph:

Learn as much as you can about the passage you are studying. It will help you hear God speak to you through the Scripture. Try to discover what the writer was saying for the time in which the passage was written. Read the surrounding verses and chapters to establish the setting or situation in which the action or teaching took place. ... Don’t force your interpretation on the biblical text. Let the Scripture speak for itself.⁵

All the DBS participants have an opportunity to read these study guidelines. However, they are only given in the introductory sections of the “Study Manual” and are thus not required reading. It would not be an overstatement that only the over-achieving student would ever read “hear God speak to you through the Scripture.”

The facilitator of each DBS uses a “Teacher Helps” guide on a weekly basis. It is telling that the “Teacher Helps” does not mention the Holy Spirit in the sections “Put the Study Manual to Work,” “Weekly Group Schedule and Procedure,” “Preparing to Teach Disciple,” “Group Building and Maintenance,” “Preparing Questions and Leading Discussion,” or in any of the other preliminary instructions and helps.⁶ The “Principles for Bible Study,” which is to be copied and handed out to every participant, also does not

⁴ Richard B. Wilke and Julia K. Wilke, *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study, Study Manual*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 4.

⁵ Wilke and Wilke, *Disciple, Study Manual*, 4.

⁶ Harriett J. Olson, ed., *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study, Teacher Helps*, 2nd ed. rev. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), 4-13.

mention the work of the Holy Spirit in Bible Study. Facilitators also have access to a DBS training video that walks through the purpose of DBS and the process of using the various elements of the DBS Study Manual. Although very practical and helpful for facilitating a DBS group, there is no mention of the work of the Holy Spirit, including the inspiration of Scripture or empowering the reading of Scripture.⁷

Given that there seems to be little emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in DBS, is there a theological basis for a more Spirit-led approach to studying Scripture? W&P, like the original DBS, takes the participants through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Unlike DBS, W&P includes an emphasis on the supernatural work of God in Scripture so as to increase in participants the understanding, practice, and ministry in the supernatural. However, does this force a theological approach to Scripture that is not present? Is there a presumption of the supernatural that is not obvious or necessary in studying Scripture? What is a theologically based pneumatological approach to Scripture?

DBS is meant to be used as a Bible study regardless of church denomination. However, my tradition is United Methodist and the original DBS was written by a United Methodist Bishop and his wife.⁸ The United Methodist Church has particularly embraced this study including the official publishing house of The United Methodist Church, Cokesbury, being the sole distributor. Because of this United Methodist influence, John Wesley will be a strong starting place since Wesley does have a pneumatological

⁷ *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study, Training Video*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), DVD.

⁸ United Methodist Bishop Richard Wilke (now retired) and his wife, Julia (now deceased), wrote the “Study Manual” for the *Disciple* series, *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study* (DBS), which is the basis for the modified study used in this DMin project, W&P.

approach to reading Scripture. Some of the Pietist and other historical influences of Wesley's pneumatological and biblical theology will then be discussed. Finally, using some modern sources, a cohesive pneumatological approach to Scripture will be proposed as a basis for this DMin project.

John Wesley's View of the Scriptures

John Wesley's View of Scripture

John Wesley famously wrote about himself as *homo unius libri* (i.e., “man of one book”). The broader context of this quote is from his “Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions”:

I want to know one thing, —the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach me the way. For this very end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*.⁹

Of course, Wesley in fact read many books. However, his final authority of belief and practice was the Bible.¹⁰ Wesley even wrote in a journal entry, “My ground is the Bible. ... I follow it in all things, both great and small.”¹¹

⁹ John Wesley, “Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions,” *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1976-), vol. 1, 104-6.

¹⁰ See a broader description of this by the now deceased United Methodist Bishop Mack B. Stokes in his wonderful little book, *The Bible in the Wesleyan Heritage* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1979), 19-23. Also see Stephen Westerholm and Martin Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture: Voices from the History of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 285-7.

¹¹ Wesley, “June 5, 1776,” *Works*, vol. 22, 42.

In other places Wesley writes of Scripture as “the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of faith and practice,” “a complete rule of faith and practice; and they are clear in all necessary points,” and “the whole and sole rule of Christian faith and practice.”¹² In his “Preface to the Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament,” Wesley further described his high view of Scripture and scriptural authority.

The Scripture, therefore, of the Old and New Testament is a most solid and precious system of divine truth. Every part thereof is worthy of God; and all together are one entire body, wherein is no defect, no excess. It is the fountain of heavenly wisdom, which they who are able to taste prefer to all writings of men, however wise or learned or holy.¹³

Wesley had a high view of Scripture and the importance of Scripture in revealing God.

That Scripture is the divinely inspired Word of God was assumed by Wesley. In his explanatory note upon 2 Timothy 3:16, Wesley writes, “*All scripture [sic] is inspired of God*—The Spirit of God not only once inspired those who wrote it, but continually inspires, supernaturally assists, those that read it with earnest prayer.”¹⁴ That the Scriptures are inspired by God will be assumed herein.¹⁵ However, that the “Spirit of God ... continually, supernaturally assists” the reading of the Bible will be explored.

¹² Stokes, *The Bible*, 21, quoting from *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, a letter to Doctor Conyers Middleton, and “Thought Upon Methodism,” respectively.

¹³ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (London, UK: Epworth Press, 1950), 8-9.

¹⁴ Wesley, *Upon the New Testament*, 794.

¹⁵ Leulseged P. Tesfaye, “Pneumatic Hermeneutics: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Theological Interpretation of Scripture,” (DMin Thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2018), 2-10. In his introduction, Tesfaye outlines a number of views of what is meant by “divine inspiration” before he goes on to focus on the role of the Holy Spirit in reading and interpretation of Scripture.

John Wesley's View on Reading Scripture

In his discussion on John Wesley's interpretation of Scripture, former Perkins School of Theology professor and current United Methodist Bishop Scott Jones writes that "three attributes of the reader are discussed [by Wesley] as being helpful to correct interpretation of Scripture: inspiration of the Holy Spirit, faith, and knowledge" although "only the first is a prerequisite." Jones goes on to quote from Wesley's preface to the *Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament*: "Serious and earnest prayer should be constantly used before we consult the oracles of God; seeing 'Scripture can only be understood through the same Spirit whereby it was given.' Our reading should likewise be closed with prayer, that what we read may be written on our hearts." Further emphasizing his point, Jones quotes from a letter of Wesley's which states, "I do firmly believe (and what serious man does not)—*omnis scriptura legi debet eo spiritu quo scripta est*: we need the same Spirit to *understand* the Scripture which enables the holy men of old to *write* it."¹⁶

Wesley seemed to take the very practical and plain approach to reading Scripture. In his "Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions," John Wesley gives a description of his approach to privately reading Scripture:

Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone; only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His book; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of Lights: — "Lord, is it not Thy word, 'if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God?' Thou givest liberally, and upbraidest not. Thou hast said, 'if any be willing to do Thy will, he shall know.' I am willing to do, let me know Thy will." I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, "comparing spiritual things with

¹⁶ Scott J. Jones, *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1995), 105. Jones respectively quotes from Wesley's "Preface" to *The Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament* and "Letter to William Warburton" published in 1763.

spiritual.” I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God: and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach.¹⁷

There is a plain path laid out: (1) read the Bible, (2) ask God for understanding and seek to do God’s will, (3) compare Scripture with other passages of Scripture, (4) meditate on the Scriptures, (5) consult with others, and (6) teach what is learned. There is much to this plain path, however. To read the Bible is to read “in His presence.” In God’s presence, the simple reading of Scripture is applied. If there is some doubt or if anything “appear dark or intricate,” then seeking God for understanding comes first with consulting other Scriptures second, presumably under the same conditions of being in the presence of God. Note that Wesley insists on more than mere knowledge: “I am willing to do, let me know Thy will.” Wesley could be summarized here: Read the Bible for God’s will and then do God’s will.

In his “Preface” to *The Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament*, Wesley also lays out a plain approach to Scripture, which starts with setting apart some time every day (morning and evening if possible) to read a chapter each from the Old and New Testaments. Wesley’s emphasizes knowing and doing the will of God: “Read [the Scripture] with a single eye, to know the whole will of God, and a fixt resolution to do it.” This can only be accomplished through the Holy Spirit: “Serious and earnest prayer should be constantly used, before we consult the oracle of God, seeing ‘Scripture can only be understood thro’ the same Spirit whereby it was given.’ Our reading should likewise be closed with prayer, that what we read may be written on our hearts.” He concludes emphasizing doing the will of God: “And whatever light you then receive,

¹⁷ Wesley, “Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions,” *Works*, vol. 1, 104-6.

should be used to the uttermost, and that immediately. Let there be no delay. Whatever you resolve, begin to execute the first moment you can. So shall you find this word to be indeed the *power of God unto present and eternal salvation*.”¹⁸

Regarding the supernatural, Wesley was no cessationist regarding the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. In his letter to the Lord Bishop of Gloucester on the Holy Spirit, Wesley wrote: “I do not recollect any Scripture wherein we are taught the miracles were to be confined with the limits of the apostolic age ... or of any period of time, longer or shorter, even till the restitution of all things.”¹⁹ Wesley resorts to the plain meaning of Scripture which does not ever say that miracles were limited to a particular time.

In his letter to the Reverend Doctor Middleton, Wesley defends the present reality of miraculous gifts including raising the dead, healing the sick, casting out devils, prophesying, seeing visions, “discovering the secrets of men” (that is, words of knowledge), and speaking in tongues.²⁰ Regarding the “casting out devils” (or deliverance), Wesley makes an appeal to the plain accounts in Scripture: “The testimonies concerning this are out of number, and as plain as words can make them. To show, therefore, that all these signify nothing, and that there were never any devils cast out at all, neither by the Apostles, nor since the Apostles, (for the argument proves both

¹⁸ John Wesley, *The Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament* (Salem, OH: Schmull, 1975), ix.

¹⁹ Wesley, “A Letter to the Right Reverend Lord Bishop of Gloucester Occasioned by His Tract on the Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit,” *Works*, vol. 11, 514. In this letter, which is more the length of a tract, Wesley defends charges that he is a “*false prophet* pretend[ing] to some *extraordinary* measure of the Spirit” (11:468) by stating, “I do not pretend to any *extraordinary* measure of the Spirit. I pretend to no other measure of it than may be claimed by every Christian minister” (11:468).

²⁰ John Wesley, “A Letter to the Reverend Doctor Conyers Middleton Occasioned by His Late ‘Free Inquiry’,” *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1872), vol. 10, 38-59. This edition of *The Works of John Wesley* will be referenced as *Works (Jackson)* in future footnotes. Some of the writings in this particular volume of *Works (Jackson)* have yet to be published in the Bicentennial Edition of *The Works of John Wesley*.

or neither,) is a task worthy of you.” Wesley then mocks Middleton by asking, “Would it not have been readier to overthrow all those testimonies at a stroke, by proving, there never was any devil in the world? Then the whole affair of casting him out had been at an end.”²¹

John Wesley’s Response to the Dangers of Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm emerged very early in the Methodist revival that began in earnest after the Fetter Lane Society meeting of January 1, 1739 of which Wesley writes: “the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground.”²² In his journal entry of January 17, 1739, Wesley writes:

I was with two persons who I doubt are properly *enthusiasts*. For, first, they think to attain the end without the means, which is *enthusiasm*, properly so called. Again, they think themselves inspired by God, and are not. But false, imaginary inspiration is *enthusiasm*. That theirs is only imaginary inspiration appears hence: it contradicts the law and the testimony.²³

Note that the answer to whether the two persons were really inspired by God or not is found in the Scriptures themselves, namely whether the inspiration “contradicts the law and the testimony.”

One of the more famous negative examples of enthusiasm was Thomas Maxfield, one of Wesley’s first lay preachers. Maxfield took the doctrine of sanctification above Scripture and claimed that the fully sanctified Christian (or “perfected Christian”) was completely without sin, and persisted in an angel-like state. Some of his followers

²¹ Wesley, “Letter to Middleton,” *Works (Jackson)*, vol. 10, 41.

²² Wesley, “January 1, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 29.

²³ Wesley, “January 17, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 31-2.

imagined they would not physically die.²⁴ In a letter response to Maxfield dated October 29, 1762, Wesley warned against enthusiasm: “I dislike something that has the appearance of *enthusiasm*: overvaluing *feelings and inward impressions*; mistaking the mere work of *imagination* for the voice of the Spirit; expecting the end without the means; and undervaluing *reason, knowledge, and wisdom* in general.” In the same entry, Wesley goes on to say that he also disliked “the appearance of *antinomianism*” and “*littleness of love*.”²⁵ Wesley’s warnings proved to be valid when one of Maxfield’s followers, George Bell, proclaimed a few months later that the world would end on February 28, 1763, and the Maxfield movement separated from Methodism and eventually imploded.²⁶

Wesley was aware of the dangers of an overemphasis on “feelings and inward impressions.” However, he did not discount feelings and impressions as much as he warned that they must be discerned as whether they are human imagination or the true voice of the Spirit. To this end, the guidance and correction of Scripture is necessary. Reason helps, but the guidance of the Holy Spirit is primary.

The Pietists’ View of Scripture

Wesley’s influences, especially regarding the use of Scripture, included the Pietists. In their overview of the history of biblical interpretation, early Christianity professor Stephen Westerholm and systematic theologian Martin Westerholm summarize

²⁴ Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*. 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013), 234-5.

²⁵ Wesley, “October 29, 1762,” *Works*, vol. 21, 394.

²⁶ Heitzenrater, *Wesley*, 235-6.

the Pietist distinctly evangelical emphases of “the personal and experiential aspects of faith (the “religion of the heart”), which in turn called for a personal “spiritual” reading of Scripture.”²⁷ Following the death of the early reformers, Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564), Christianity began to become more an intellectual exercise than a lived reality. The Pietists sought a more experiential and ethical faith (i.e., internal and external holiness). Bridwell Library of Perkins School of Theology hosted an exhibition in the Elizabeth Perkins Prothro Galleries called, “The Pietists.”²⁸ In this exhibit was an excellent summary of Pietism, a “religion of the heart,” especially as applied to this

DMin project:

Pietism’s spirituality was rooted in the transformative inner experience of spiritual rebirth (conversion) through which the Holy Spirit acts to foster a godly way of living (sanctification). Pietists stressed the application of faith (love of God and neighbor) more than the quest for doctrinal purity and uniformity. They valued Bible study for guidance while seeking new inspiration from the Holy Spirit. Pietists also emphasized the concept of the priesthood of believers and applied it to both women and men. They viewed evangelism and good works as tools through which God would transform the world.²⁹

Three pietists, Philip Spener, August Francke, and Johann Bengel, are examined herein for their approach to understanding Scripture, especially in view of the work of the Holy Spirit.

²⁷ Stephen Westerholm and Martin Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture: Voices from the History of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 270.

²⁸ This exhibit was held August 20 through December 14, 2018, during the time this chapter was being written, mostly on-site at Bridwell Library.

²⁹ “The Pietists,” Bridwell Library at Perkins School of Theology, accessed November 5, 2018, <https://www.smu.edu/bridwell/specialcollectionsandarchives/exhibitions/pietists>.

Philip Spener

Philip Spener's work, *Pia Desideria*, published in 1675, is considered the beginning of Pietism proper. *Pia Desideria* is written in three parts titled: "Conspectus of Corrupt Conditions in the Church," "The Possibility of Better Conditions in the Church," and "Proposals to Correct Conditions in the Church." The first suggestion Spener offers for correcting the church begins: "Thought should be given to a *more extensive use of the Word of God among us*. ... The more at home the Word of God is among us, the more we shall bring about faith and its fruits."³⁰

Spener approves of "the preaching of sermons in which a Christian congregation is instructed by the reading and exposition of a certain text."³¹ However, preaching biblical sermons is not enough in that congregations would be exposed to only a limited part of the Scriptures through sermons. He argues that "*all* scripture, without exception, should be known by the congregation."³²

To accomplish encountering all of Scripture, Spener suggests a threefold approach. First, each household should have a Bible whereby there would be daily reading of the Holy Scriptures, "especially of the New Testament." Second, each person would be encouraged to read privately, even suggesting that this could be done "at specified times in the public service, without further comment" so that all would be edified, especially those who cannot read or who do not own a Bible. However, these first

³⁰ Philip J. Spener, *Pia Desderia*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1989), 87.

³¹ Spener, *Pia Desderia*, 87.

³² Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 88.

two in and of themselves are lacking since they “cannot provide the reader with a sufficient explanation of all that he [or she] would like to know.”³³

Spener proposes a third approach which addresses the issues of encountering all of Scripture and providing opportunities for understanding: “the ancient and apostolic kind of church meetings.” Outside the normal church services that include preaching, people would meet together to “take up the Holy Scriptures, read aloud from them, and fraternally discuss each verse in order to discover its simple meaning and whatever may be useful for the edification of all.” Spener suggests these meetings be held under the direction of ministers. In addition, those “who have been blessed with gifts and knowledge ... and present their pious opinions on the proposed subject to the judgement of the rest.” Those who seek more understanding would be permitted to express their doubts and seek further explanation. Preachers, who lead the meetings, would prevent disorderly conduct and present their understanding of the passage. Spener concludes, “Then all that has been contributed, insofar as it accords with the sense of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, should be carefully considered by the rest, especially by the ordained ministers, and applied to the edification of the whole meeting.”³⁴

What Spener proposes is “a precursor of the modern group Bible study.”³⁵ His proposal, to be sure, prefers the pastor-led approach. In referring to the occasion of the writing of *Pia Desideria*, the corrupt condition of the church and community, Spener writes, “If we succeed in getting the people to seek eagerly and diligently in the book of

³³ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 90.

³⁴ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 89-90.

³⁵ Westerholm and Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture*, 272.

life for their joy, their spiritual life will be wonderfully strengthened and they will become altogether different people.”³⁶

In his “Proposal to Correct Conditions of the Church,” Spener also proposes “*the establishment and diligent exercise of the spiritual priesthood*” in which “not only ministers but all Christians are made priests by their Savior, are anointed by the Holy Spirit, and are dedicated to perform spiritual-priestly acts.”³⁷ These acts not only include “prayer, thanksgiving, good works, alms, etc., but also industriously to study in the Word of the Lord, with the grace that is given him [sic] to teach others.”³⁸ All Christians are meant to grow in their faith and to be active participants in the faith. The Holy Spirit works through all Christians and all are to learn and teach, as God has gifted them.

Connected with the first (“*more extensive use of the Word of God among us*”) and second (“*the establishment and diligent exercise of the spiritual priesthood*”) proposals is a third: “the people must have impressed upon them and must accustom themselves to believing that *it is by no means enough to have knowledge of the Christian faith, for Christianity consists rather of practice.*” Spener summarizes the practice of Christianity as love in action. “Love is the whole life of the man who has faith and who through his faith is saved, and his fulfillment of the laws of God consists of love.” Spener even suggests active accountability in which a Christian “regularly reports how they live, what opportunities they have had to practice Christian love, and how they have employed or

³⁶ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 91.

³⁷ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 92.

³⁸ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 94.

neglected them.”³⁹ A group of Christians in confidential relationships with each other can encourage and correct each other in their Christian walk.

Taking the first three of his proposals together, Spener provides the beginning of a theological basis for Bible study. The entire Scriptures should be read and discussed. Each participant is meant to be a Christian and anointed by the Holy Spirit to engage in acts of faith as part of the priesthood of all believers (see 1 Peter 2:9), which include studying and teaching Scripture as gifted by God. Finally, it is not enough to simply understand, or even to teach, the Bible, but understanding must be put into practice in love, for “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26).

August Francke

August Hermann Francke, as a disciple of Philip Spener, continued the process of understanding Biblical study. In *A Guide to the Reading and Study of the Holy Scriptures*, Francke emphasized the importance of biblical study, which elevated the importance of the “etymology, signification, syntax, and idiom” of the original Greek and Hebrew languages.⁴⁰ His academic rigor, however, was couched in the overall discussion of the “letter” and the “spirit” of the Scriptures. “Separate from [the spirit], the [letter] is empty and inconsistent; but when both are united, the study of the Divinity is rendered

³⁹ Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 95-97.

⁴⁰ Westerholm and Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture*, 275, quoting August H. Francke, *A Guide to the Reading and Study of the Holy Scriptures*, 3rd ed., trans. by William Jaques (London, UK: David Hogan, 1819), 3.

complete.”⁴¹ This approaches the present project of uniting Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit in “Word and Power.”

After a detailed description of proper reading of the “letter” including chapters on “Grammatical Reading,” “Historical Reading,” and “Analytical Reading,” Francke turns to the “spirit” of the text, including chapters on “Expository Reading,” “Doctrinal Reading,” “Inferential Reading,” and “Practical Reading.” This is where the work of the Holy Spirit in understanding Scripture is vital.

Francke writes: “Expository Reading of the Scriptures has reference to the Literal Sense purposed by the Holy Spirit; and its object is to develop and expound it.”⁴² In order to discover this “Literal Sense,” described by Francke as the “one and true meaning of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures,” the reader must be guided by the Spirit rather than the natural. The natural man, as Francke argues, does not have “any perception of the things of the Spirit of God.” He emphasizes that “[i]n treating of the Literal Sense, we must distinguish it from that which, by means of natural judgment or genuine helps to exposition, may be comprehended by the unregenerate;—by those who are destitute of the Spirit’s light.”⁴³ Francke later agrees with a quote by Philip Melancthon, contemporary of and a significant German reformer after Martin Luther: “The gift of interpretation indeed, belongs not to the ungodly, but is with the assembly which is governed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Francke, *Guide*, 1-2.

⁴² Francke, *Guide*, 68.

⁴³ Francke, *Guide*, 70.

⁴⁴ Francke, *Guide*, 92.

Francke describes “internal helps” with regard to understanding Scripture. These include reading the text in the broader scope of context, comparing to parallel passages, and most importantly “The Analogy of Faith.”⁴⁵ The Analogy of Faith avoids a “number of human opinions” from a wrong interpretation of Scripture or from a misguided ecclesiastical tradition. The Analogy of Faith regards “the agreement and universal harmony of the [Scriptures]” which assumes “the harmony and perfect consistency” of Scripture which is “founded on the universal agreement of the Inspired Writers.”⁴⁶ There are “external works” of value in understanding Scripture, but Francke emphasizes that “in all things pertaining to eternal salvation, the Scriptures sufficiently explain themselves.”⁴⁷ “Internal helps” are decidedly preferred over “external helps” as reading of Scripture itself is “too easily neglected, when we are searching after many and various External Helps.” In fact, those who “read the word with devotion and simplicity ... derive more light and profit from such a practice, and from connecting meditation with it.”⁴⁸

Lest he be accused of overemphasizing reason over experience in understanding Scripture, Francke includes an appendix titled, “A Treatise on the Affections, as Connected with the Study of the Holy Scriptures.” Affections, or feelings, Francke states, “are closely united with the language of Inspiration” so much so that Scripture “cannot be adequately expounded” by those who “never enter into the *feelings* of the Inspired Penmen.”⁴⁹ In reading the Scriptures, the hearts of the readers “under the influence of the

⁴⁵ Francke, *Guide*, 74-83.

⁴⁶ Francke, *Guide*, 80-1, 83.

⁴⁷ Francke, *Guide*, 90.

⁴⁸ Francke, *Guide*, 95.

⁴⁹ Francke, *Guide*, 153.

Holy Spirit, overflow with *gracious* Affections.”⁵⁰ Francke concludes, “The meaning of Scripture, thus laid up in the *heart*, rather than the *head*, will transform our soul ‘from glory into glory;’ and we shall experience that ‘the word of God is quick and powerful’.”⁵¹

Johann Bengel

The final Pietist theologian to be discussed herein is Johann Albrecht Bengel. Westerholm and Westerholm describe him as “one of the foremost biblical scholars of the eighteenth century, and John Wesley, for his part, may have been Bengel’s greatest admirer.”⁵² Academically, Bengel has a place in history as a textual critic who developed a means of determining the “best” reading of Scripture when there are variant readings in biblical manuscripts. Bengel insists that although the authors of Scripture were inspired, copyists of Scripture were fallible human beings. Westerholm and Westerholm conclude that “as a result of his study, Bengel became convinced that the manuscripts contain no reading “which in the least affect the foundation of our faith.”⁵³

More important to this project is the conclusion that: “Bengel both emphasized the importance of biblical scholarship and cautioned that such scholarship can become an end in itself.”⁵⁴ Bengel writes, “There is no bodily or mental labor which may not be made injurious to our secret and perpetual communion with God. Even Scripture

⁵⁰ Francke, *Guide*, 151.

⁵¹ Francke, *Guide*, 185.

⁵² Westerholm and Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture*, 270.

⁵³ Westerholm and Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture*, 283.

⁵⁴ Westerholm and Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture*, 280.

researches may, without needful discretion, very easily occasion in learned men an indifference to true godliness, instead of nourishing any desire for it, or delight in it.”⁵⁵

Bengel warned that Scripture’s power and authority are undermined when truths are attempted to be learned from the inspired texts “by our own mere reasoning.”⁵⁶ Bible study is not meant to be an end in itself, and in fact, there is grave danger in divorcing the power of the Holy Spirit from the Word of God. Bible study is not meant to increase learning but to increase faith.⁵⁷

A Pneumatological Approach to Scripture

Summary of Wesley and the Pietists

This brief examination of three Pietists (Spener, Francke, and Bengel) reveals some of the basic ideas that Wesley used in his understanding of Scripture. Spener emphasizes the importance of each and every person reading the Scriptures, not just parts of the Bible but all of the Bible. To aid in this endeavor, Spener suggests group Bible reading and study, which results not only in learning Scripture but also in the practice of it towards Christian faith and love.

Francke builds on Spener’s approach with some practical guidelines to understanding Scripture. He emphasizes the unity of the “letter” and the “spirit” in

⁵⁵ Westerholm and Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture*, 280.

⁵⁶ Westerholm and Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture*, 281.

⁵⁷ Frank Billman, in private correspondence, points to 2 Tim. 3:7 where Paul warns of those who are “always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.” Billman mentions that the word “knowledge” here is the Greek word ἐπίγνωσιν, which means an intimate, personal knowing. From this, Bible study should lead to an intimate, personal knowing of God and not a learning of mere information.

Scriptures, where there is academic rigor in understanding the text but that the basic understanding of the text (Francke refers to this as the “Literal Sense”) is guided by the Holy Spirit. This spiritual guidance is aided by internal helps such as reading in the broader context, comparing Scripture with Scripture, and the “Analogy of Faith.” This latter help is most important as it is based upon the “inspired writers” of the Bible that results in an assumed harmony and consistency in Scripture. Although academically rigorous, Francke does not aim for simple head knowledge but that there is an experience of Scripture as well (Francke calls them “Affections”) wherein the soul is transformed.

Speaking to this last theme of avoiding simple head knowledge, Bengel warns that the scholarly study of the Bible could become an end in itself. Reading the Bible should result in godliness and, in fact, a delight in godliness. As much as reasoning is important in the study of Scripture (Bengel did pioneer textual criticism), mere reasoning is insufficient and even dangerous in understanding Scripture.

The Pietists emphasized the need for the Holy Spirit in understanding Scripture. Their primary objective in reading and understanding Scripture was holiness of heart and life. Wesley took up this mantle from the Pietists by maintaining that Scripture was the primary source for Christian belief and practice. Unlike the Pietists, however, Wesley understood the Bible to plainly include the supernatural (miraculous) work of the Holy Spirit as part of Christian belief and practice.

Wesley, like the Pietists before him, desired all to read all of the Scriptures. He wrote commentaries on the Old Testament and the New Testament, for this very reason. Wesley even states in his preface to the Old Testament commentary that “My design ... is this: ... to keep [their] eye[s] fixt upon the naked Bible, that [they] may read and hear it

with understanding.”⁵⁸ The reading of the Scripture, whether done individually or in groups (both are necessary) is accomplished with the guidance of the Holy Spirit in prayer. Like the Pietists, the primary text is Scripture read in context, as a whole, and comparing passage to passage.

As described in some detail in the historical background of Wesley’s life, especially before and after the Fetter Lane Society meeting of January 1, 1739, Wesley experienced supernatural, miraculous occurrences in his ministry. Wesley also saw in the plain reading of Scripture the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit that in no way was required by the Scripture text to have ceased with the end of Apostolic age. Therefore, the Bible could be read not only under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but also with an eye towards the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. Although warning that “enthusiasm” (mere human imagination or experience) is to be avoided, Wesley knew that there were authentic supernatural workings of the Holy Spirit and that Scripture was the primary means to discern the difference.

The Work of the Holy Spirit in Scripture

Following Wesley as the founder of Methodism, the work of the Holy Spirit in reading and applying Scripture is a foundational belief in The United Methodist Church. “The Confession of Faith of the Evangelical United Brethren Church” is one of the four accepted doctrinal standards of The United Methodist Church (along with “The Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church,” “The Standard Sermons of Wesley,” and “The Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament”). Article Four of the Confession states:

⁵⁸ Wesley, *Upon the Old Testament*, viii.

“We believe the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, reveals the Word of God so far as it necessary for our salvation. It is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice.”⁵⁹ Therefore, the Holy Spirit not only inspired the writing of Scripture, but is also the ever-present inspiration in the reading of Scripture.

Dr. William Abraham, the Albert Cook Outler Professor of Wesley Studies at Perkins School of Theology, states in *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation*, “We cannot come to see in a deep way what Christ has done, and thereby what God has revealed through him, without a profound immersion in the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁰ In a catechesis book, *Key United Methodist Beliefs*, that Abraham co-wrote with David Watson, the authors state, “God teaches us through the Bible by the work of the Holy Spirit.” That is why “Wesley said that we should always close our reading of Scripture with prayer.”⁶¹ In essence, understanding Divine Revelation in the Scriptures is not even possible without the Holy Spirit.

J. Rodman Williams, former professor of Austin Presbyterian Seminary, was one of the leading theologians in the Charismatic movement and past president of Society for Pentecostal Studies. He wrote a seminal three-volume work (now available in a single volume addition) called *Renewal Theology* in which he presents a systematic theology from within the charismatic renewal movement. In the first volume he writes:

There can be no true understanding of Scripture without the internal illumination of the Holy Spirit. Since all Scripture is ‘God-breathed,’ it is only when that

⁵⁹ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016), 73.

⁶⁰ William J. Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 64.

⁶¹ William J. Abraham and David F. Watson, *Key United Methodist Beliefs* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013), 120.

breath of God, the Spirit of God, moves on the words that its meaning can be truly comprehended. ... Scripture can be understood in depth only through the illumination of the Holy Spirit.⁶²

This again states clearly the principal that the Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of the text is also present to reveal meaning in the reading of the text.

Bethel Church senior leader and leading expert on the work of the Holy Spirit, Bill Johnson, controversially says, “It is hard to have the same fruit as the early Church when we value a book they did not have more than the Holy Spirit they did have.” He refutes critics of this statement by further clarifying, “We must maintain the value of Scripture, while increasing our value of the Holy Spirit.”⁶³ In essence, the work of the Holy Spirit as seen in Scripture is also welcomed in the present lives of believers. For instance, since God spoke to people in Scripture (Adam, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, Deborah, Anna, Peter, Paul, etc., etc.), we welcome (and even expect) God to speak to people now.

In his book, *What’s Wrong with Protestant Theology?*, Professor Emeritus Jon Ruthven of Regent University School Divinity, looks at the emphasis of Scripture to determine the central messages of the Bible. If preconceptions are removed, Ruthven argues that the basic plotline of biblical narratives contains two basic elements: God revealing instructions to a person and the person testing that word in order to move from self-reliance to hearing and heeding God’s voice.⁶⁴ In one of his many examples,

⁶² J. Rodman Willimans, *Renewal Theology: God, the World, and Redemption* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1988), 24.

⁶³ Bill Johnson, *Experience the Impossible: Simple Ways to Unleash Heaven’s Power on Earth* (Minneapolis, MN: Chosen, 2013), 31.

⁶⁴ Jon M. Ruthven, *What’s Wrong With Protestant Theology?: Tradition vs. Biblical Emphasis* (Tulsa, OK: Word and Spirit Press, 2013), 40.

Ruthven shows that “what is prayed for in the New Testament is primarily revelation, i.e., signs and wonders, prophecy” and therefore for the modern reader “the New Testament teaches overwhelmingly to pray for God’s revelation and power!”⁶⁵ He concludes that the written Word of God (the Bible, especially the New Testament) not only emphasizes the traditional Protestant themes of “‘salvation’ from eternal punishment and ‘sanctification’ from sin” but also the spoken word of God, which is the “immediate voice of God revealed directly to the human heart.” Obeying this spoken word of God “precipitates the revelation of God in charismata, in signs and wonders.” He writes that his central thesis in the book “is that the miracle-producing word of God revealed directly to our hearts is the central process in the Bible ... [and] obedience to this word results in the mighty acts of God.”⁶⁶

Ruthven goes on to translate his central thesis into a model biblical discipleship program with seven governing principles. (1) “Study of the ‘Word of God written’ (the Scripture) follows immediately from and simultaneously with the experience of hearing God’s voice.” (2) The mission of Jesus Christ, including the “reception and expression of the gift of the Spirit,” is normative and to be modeled. (3) The presence and love of God would be practiced with the goal of intimacy with Jesus. (4) The love of God would result, automatically, in love for neighbor. (5) Prayer would be central to the training. (6) Practicing the spiritual gifts (i.e., the charismata), both within the body and towards those outside, would be “imperative from the very beginning of the training.” (7) The goal would not be to grasp ideas but “growth in faith, power, love, maturity, and

⁶⁵ Ruthven, *What’s Wrong*, 152.

⁶⁶ Ruthven, *What’s Wrong*, 296.

effectiveness in mission.”⁶⁷ This last principal is more directed towards formalized degree programs but is still a strong corrective in which the “What did you learn?” question is replaced with “What did you practice?”.

Following in the footsteps of Wesley, there is a valid pneumatological approach to Scripture that includes the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. This approach starts with the Holy Spirit inspiring the reading of the Bible. The Bible itself is the primary text and the Holy Spirit is the primary guide for understanding that text. Scripture should be read individually and in group settings, with or without a clergy person leading the session. It is possible, and dangerous, for the reading of Scripture to become simply a mental exercise of increasing knowledge. Therefore, the practice of what is learned in Scripture is necessary for a true transformation of the person. Because of the supernatural work of God present in Scripture, Bible reading can and should lead participants into an encounter with the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.

Discovery Bible Study

A modern application of this pneumatological approach to Bible study can be found in the Discovery Bible Study (“Discovery”) approach developed by father/son team David and Paul Watson.⁶⁸ “Discovery” has been used successfully in evangelism especially to Muslims in various Muslim-dominated societies, with the supernatural work

⁶⁷ Ruthven, *What’s Wrong*, 296-7.

⁶⁸ David Watson is the Vice-President for Global Disciple-Making of Cityteam Ministries. He has been involved with church-planting movements since 1989 that have seen over 100,000 churches started and he has trained more than 30,000 leaders from 167 nations. Paul Watson, David’s son, also works with Cityteam Ministries as the City Director of the Recovery Center in Portland, OR.

of the Holy Spirit being present in many miraculous ways.⁶⁹ The “Discovery” approach is group Bible study with prayerful goals including: engaging with God’s Word deeply, having God’s Word address “questions they have about life,” having their lives changed as they read Scripture, and listening “to the Holy Spirit as God draws them to Him.”⁷⁰

Since “Discovery” is designed to be used with people essentially unreached by the Gospel, the problems of misreading Scripture, bad theological conclusions, and misapplication would seem to be prevalent. However, the group approach to Bible study can greatly help overcome these obstacles. As described in *Contagious Disciple Making*, the advantages of groups include the following: “*Groups remember more than individuals,*” “*Groups can learn faster than individuals,*” “*Groups are a protection against bad leadership and heresy,*” and “*Groups self-correct.*” For instance, “groups that measure what leaders say against Scripture can easily stop the actions of leaders who try to implement extrabiblical, or even unbiblical, policies and procedures.” Further, group members “correct one another when someone introduces an interpretation or application of Scripture that [is not] apparent in the passage.” However, for this to work properly, “the authority of Scripture and the Holy Spirit [must be] part of the group DNA and group process.”⁷¹

⁶⁹ For amazing stories of the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit and application of the Discovery Bible Study in Muslim dominated areas see Jerry Trousdale, *Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims Are Falling in Love with Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), Kindle.

⁷⁰ David Watson and Paul Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making: Leading Others on a Journey of Discovery*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2014), Kindle, 101.

⁷¹ Watson and Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making*, 141-2.

Conclusion

The pneumatological approach to Scripture as seen in the theology of John Wesley and a few of his Pietist predecessors is readily applied to the presenting Bible Study, “Word and Power.” Like DBS, W&P seeks for participants to primarily read the Bible. However, like Wesley and the Pietists, W&P emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit in the reading of Scripture. Repeating what Wesley wrote about Scripture: “The Spirit of God not only once inspired those who wrote it, but continually inspires, supernaturally assists, those that read it with earnest prayer.”⁷² Therefore, prayer before and after reading the Bible should be emphasized to the point of a requirement for participants.

W&P, like DBS, has a basic pattern of reading the Scripture texts for the first five days of a week’s lesson, followed by a teaching on day six. The seventh day is when the class gathers to discuss and apply the text. Thus, with the work of the Holy Spirit in guiding the participant, the biblical text is first encountered directly rather than through a commentary on the Scripture. The emphasis of W&P, however, seeks for participants to see the supernatural work of God in the text and then be open to that same power working in their lives. John Wesley saw the miraculous work of God in Scripture and then was open to that miraculous work in his life. For instance, there seems to be no clear evidence that Wesley himself spoke in tongues, but Wesley saw the plain meaning of Scripture to allow for speaking in tongues.⁷³

⁷² Wesley, *Upon the New Testament*, 794.

⁷³ See especially Wesley’s discussion on speaking in tongues in the previously referenced letter to Middleton in *Works (Jackson)*, 54-59.

Seeing the miraculous work of God in Scripture will most likely not be the biggest hurdle for W&P. As stated, the intent of this DMin project is to increase the supernatural understanding, practice and ministry of participants through W&P. Wesley and the representative Pietists were clear that simple head knowledge did not result in transformation. As Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 8:1, knowledge alone “puffs up, but love builds up.” A Bible study where mere discussion results is not the goal of DBS or W&P. Paul states, “For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power” (1 Cor. 4:20). In addition to discussion, participants or W&P are guided into the practice and ministry of the supernatural work of God. As they see God supernaturally work through people in Scripture, participants will be similarly asked to let God supernaturally work in them. As they practice being open to having God supernaturally work in them, they will then be encouraged to have God supernaturally work through them in ministry to others.

John Wesley’s words may be best to conclude. In the very beginning of his commentary on the book of Genesis, Wesley writes:

“The *Holy Bible*, or *Book*, is so called by way of eminency, as it is the best book that ever was written. The *great things of God’s law* and gospel are here *written*, that they might be reduced to a *greater certainty*, might *spread further*, remain *longer*, and be transmitted to different places and ages, more *pure* and *entire* than possibly they could be by tradition. ... Lord, open our eyes, that we may see the wondrous things both of thy law and gospel!”⁷⁴

In no way betraying Wesley, but instead following in his path, we may modify this passage by praying: “Lord, open our eyes, that we may see the wondrous things both of thy law and gospel regarding Your will and then give us the courage and power to do Your wondrous will.”

⁷⁴ Wesley, “Notes on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis,” *Upon the Old Testament*, 1.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

As described in the theological discussion, Philip Spener, in his *Pia Desideria* written in 1675, proposes a group Bible study approach which leads to “pious desires” (the translation of *pia desideria*). Spener wrote that “getting the people to seek eagerly and diligently in the book of life for their joy, their spiritual life will be wonderfully strengthened and they will become altogether different people.”¹ This is Bible study leading to transformation of peoples’ lives. Wesley refers to this type of transformational study when he writes autobiographically, “In the year 1729 I began not only to read but to *study* the Bible, as the one, the only standard of truth, and the only model of pure religion. Hence I saw, in a clearer and clearer light, the indispensable necessity of having ‘the mind which was in Christ,’ and of ‘walking as Christ also walks.’”²

John Wesley implemented transformative groups with Methodist band meetings and class meetings. The band meetings were an intimate accountability group which were designed according to Wesley with James 5:16 in mind: “Confess your faults one to

¹ Philip J. Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1989), 91.

² John Wesley, “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,” *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1976–), vol. 13, 137.

another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed.”³ The band meetings were not study groups in any sense, but small groups that helped people “connect well with God and others.”⁴ The class meetings were more common and were meant to “give toward the relief of the poor; to inquire how their souls prosper; [and] to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require.”⁵ Those in the class meetings, which gathered together geographically as a society, were to follow the three general rules: do no harm, do good, and attend upon all the ordinances of God. This third rule included “the ministry of the Word, either read or expounded” and “searching the Scriptures.”⁶

In his book on the theory and practice of the Wesley class meeting, assistant professor of Historical Theology and Wesleyan Studies at Seattle Pacific University Kevin Watson describes three typical approaches to small groups in the contemporary western church: affinity groups, information-driven groups, and transformation-driven groups. The first is centered around a common interest, which may or may not be explicitly Christian in focus, such as a cooking class or a book club. The second type includes a typical Bible study where people gather to learn more about their faith. The third type “focus not on discussion or mastery of content, but on changed lives, on group members’ experience of God.” Transformational groups are “primarily focused on living and not on learning.”⁷ DBS and “Word and Power” are both meant to move the

³ Wesley, “Rules of the Band Societies, Drawn up Dec. 24, 1738,” *Works*, vol. 9, 77-8.

⁴ Kevin M. Watson and Scott T. Kisker, *The Band Meeting: Rediscovering Relationship Discipleship in Transformational Community* (Franklin, TN: Seedbed, 2017), Kindle location 291.

⁵ Wesley, “The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies,” *Works*, vol. 9, 70-1.

⁶ Wesley, “The Nature . . . of the United Societies,” *Works*, vol. 9, 73.

⁷ Kevin M. Watson, *The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience* (Franklin, TN: Seedbed, 2014), 5-6.

information-driven groups into transformation-driven groups. Watson lauds the work of DBS saying “it does the best job of any curriculum-driven approach to small groups” as it “self-consciously strives to bridge the gap between informational and transformational approaches to the Christian life.”⁸

Transformation is the stated intent of DBS. In the training video for facilitators, United Methodist Bishop Richard Wilke, co-author of DBS, states that the study is meant to be “transformational and not informational.”⁹ Emphasizing this point, Bob Winstead, National Disciple Trainer and United Methodist Pastor from Atlanta, Georgia, states in the same training video about DBS that “the means is Bible study and the end is faithful and committed discipleship.”¹⁰ Nancy Kruh, former editor for *The Dallas Morning News* and a DBS graduate, wrote *The Disciple Story* by interviewing early leaders of DBS and hundreds of study participants. It is telling that the subtitle of this book is *The Transforming Power of Scripture*. She writes that the “idea of personal transformation” would set DBS apart from other studies. DBS would not “simply teach the contents of the

⁸ Watson, *Class Meeting*, 7. Despite this accolade, Watson goes on to suggest that curriculum-based groups are inherently limited since they still tend to lead participants into “*knowing* the right things” rather than “*living in Christ*.” As Christians become more dependent upon curriculum-based studies, the less likely they are to be “released to love God and neighbor with their lives” and “less confident in their own ability to understand and respond to unexpected circumstance[s] in their lives.” (Watson, *Class Meeting*, 7). The goal of “Word and Power” is to increase the supernatural understanding, practice and ministry of participants with the hope that love of God and neighbor is released in participants’ lives and that Spirit-led lives are better able to understand and respond to unexpected circumstances. However, “Word and Power” or any other curriculum-based group is most effective alongside long term groups centered on the class meeting ideas based upon Wesley as Watson outlines in his book. Curriculum-based groups are necessarily short-term while accountability groups like class meetings can be life-long.

⁹ “Disciple: What is Disciple?” *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study, Training Video*. DVD. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005.

¹⁰ “Disciple: What is Disciple?” *Disciple Training Video*.

Bible; it would actively challenge people to become Christian disciples.”¹¹ As Bishop Wilke writes in foreword to this book, “[Kruh] gathered story after story behind the words, ‘*Disciple* changed my life.’”¹²

Since transformation is a stated objective of DBS and therefore also of W&P, a brief overview of “transformative learning theory” is presented from the secular field of adult education. Jack Mezirow, former professor of adult and continuing education at Columbia University, developed transformative learning theory especially as applied to the field of adult education in a 1978 article, “Perspective Transformation,” published in *Adult Education Quarterly*.¹³ In this chapter, Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning will be outlined and modifications that apply this theory to ministry will be briefly examined. Transformative learning theory will be shown to be very applicable to DBS and W&P.

Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow defines transformative learning as “*learning that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change.*”¹⁴ In his encyclopedic article on transformative learning theory, University of North British Columbia professor Andrew Kitchenham summarizes transformative learning theory this way:

¹¹ Nancy Kruh, *The Disciple Story: The Transforming Power of Scripture* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 39.

¹² Richard B. Wilke, “Foreword,” in Kruh, *The Disciple Story*, xii.

¹³ *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education*, ed. Jack Mezirow and Edward W. Taylor (San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass, 2009), xxv.

¹⁴ Mezirow, “Transformative Learning Theory,” in *Transformative Learning*, 22.

Central to the theory is the argument that adults experience a catalyst that causes them to question their worldview, the disorienting dilemma, which leads to a fundamental change in the way that they view the world. ... The learner engages in critical reflection or critical self-reflection which entails examining the influences around oneself that contribute to a worldview change or examining those influences as they apply to oneself and one's worldview, respectively. Each frame of reference is comprised of a series of habits of mind, meaning schemes, and meaning perspectives which can lead to a perspective transformation.¹⁵

Edward Taylor, professor of adult education and co-editor with Mezirow of the seminal text *Transformative Learning in Practice*, states simply that the basic premise of transformative learning is “teaching for change.”¹⁶

In later work, Mezirow identified ten phases that learners could experience in transformation learning.¹⁷ These are personal transformations. He later augmented the ten phases with an additional phase based on perspective transformation rather than personal transformation.¹⁸ The eleven phases are listed in table 1. The table shows that the process can be messy, especially in the early phases of critical self-examination that can involve disorientation, feelings of guilt and shame, evaluation of personal assumptions that have been taken for granted whether helpful or detrimental, and discontentment with the status quo. However, an examination of phases five through eleven outline the great reward of continuation of the process. This table clearly reveals that transformative learning is not about gathering more information but about becoming a different person.

¹⁵ Andrew Kitchenham, “Jack Mezirow on Transformative Learning,” in *Encyclopedia of the Sciences of Learning*, 2012 Ed., ed. Norbert M. Seel, 1659-61 (Boston, MA: Springer, 2012), 1659, Accessed November 29, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1428-6_362.

¹⁶ Taylor, “Fostering Transformative Learning,” in *Transformative Learning*, 3.

¹⁷ Jack Mezirow, “Learning to Think Like an Adult: Core Concepts of Transformation Theory,” in *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*, by Jack Mezirow and Associates (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 22.

¹⁸ Kitchenham, “Jack Mezirow on Transformative Learning,” 1659.

Table 1. Mezirow's Eleven Phases of Transformative Learning.¹⁹

Phase 1	A disorienting dilemma
Phase 2	A self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
Phase 3	A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
Phase 4	Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
Phase 5	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
Phase 6	Planning of a course of action
Phase 7	Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
Phase 8	Provisional trying of new roles
Phase 9	Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
Phase 10	A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective
Phase 11	Altering present relationships and forging new relationships

As opposed to teaching with the goal of students mastering material, information, concepts, ideas, etc., transformative learning is designed to transform the student. It is “the process of effecting change in a *frame of reference*.”²⁰ Frames of reference from which a person thinks, feels, and acts naturally are not assumed as valid, but are intentionally probed. Through transformative learning, the frame of reference is changed. Curriculum material may be applied externally, but transformative learning is “internally

¹⁹ Kitchenham, “Jack Mezirow on Transformative Learning,” 1660.

²⁰ Jack Mezirow, “Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice,” in *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education* 74 (Summer 1997): 5-12.

driven liberation.”²¹ Mezirow describes the process as “the recognition of a critical dimension of learning in adulthood that enables us to recognize, reassess, and modify the structures of assumptions and expectations that form our tacit points of view and influence our thinking, beliefs, attitudes, and actions.”²²

Taylor greatly aids the understanding of transformation learning by describing six basic core elements: individual experience, critical reflection, dialogue, holistic orientation, awareness of context, and an authentic practice.²³ Each of these will be discussed briefly as a means to understand the practical application of transformative learning. As each is discussed, the reader is encouraged to consider these elements as possibly applied to the specific adult education practice of a Bible study.

“Individual experience” is twofold in that the adult learner brings prior experiences to the classroom and then the classroom provides experiences that challenge the learner. Rather than assuming a *tabula rasa* (blank slate) approach to learning, the past experiences that students bring into the learning environment become the ground from which internalizing learning is encouraged. Taylor quotes a study of a graduate nursing program that found “nurses with more experience are more likely to internalize the new points of view to which their education exposes them.”²⁴ Because of the

²¹ Peter Easton, Karen Monkman, and Rebecca Miles, “Breaking Out of the Egg: Methods of Transformative Learning in Rural West Africa,” in *Transformative Learning*, 238. This powerful essay using field practice among Senegalese women in rural west Africa describes how entire communities have turned away from the deeply rooted cultural practice of female genital cutting through internally driven changes resulting from transformative learning.

²² Mezirow, “Transformative Learning Theory,” 18.

²³ Taylor, “Fostering Transformative Learning,” 4.

²⁴ Taylor, “Fostering Transformative Learning,” 6, quoting from C.E. Cragg, R.C. Plotnikoff, K. Hugo, and A. Casey, “Perspective Transformation in RN-to-BSN Distance Education,” in *Journal of Nursing Education*, 40, no. 7 (2001): 317-322.

importance of experience, transformative learning intentionally creates experiences in the learning environment. These experiences can include drama, lecture, discussion, field-trips, art, etc., that allows the learner opportunities to confront their own personal stories and frames of reference.²⁵

“Critical reflection” allows for the learner to encounter transformation through reflection. The learners consider what they have experienced, personally reflect on these experiences, and then allow this reflection to modify future action. Taylor describes three forms of reflection: content (what-focused), process (how-focused), and premise (why-focused), emphasizing that it is the premise reflection, exploring the ‘why’ questions, that is the basis for critical reflection.²⁶ Mezirow describes this “why” approach of critical reflection as “reflection on presuppositions” as opposed to simple reflection on actions.²⁷ As learners consider why they think, feel, or act in certain ways, they can consider whether the underlying why factors should be reevaluated or changed. Understanding why to have a particular character trait or why to perform a certain action gives motivation and energy to discerning what those traits and/or actions should be and learning how to achieve them.

“Dialogue” with self and others is the actual process promoting and developing transformation. Effective dialogue is not simply freeform talking or analytical discussion, but dialogue “emphasizing relational and trustful communication.”²⁸ This type of

²⁵ Taylor, “Fostering Transformative Learning,” 6.

²⁶ Taylor, “Fostering Transformative Learning,” 7-8.

²⁷ Jack Mezirow, “How Critical Reflection Triggers Transformative Learning,” in *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood*, by Jack Mezirow and Associates (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1990), 6.

²⁸ Taylor, “Fostering Transformative Learning,” 9.

dialogue must be purposefully designed into the instruction. In the context of sociology education, Langan, Sheese, and Davidson identify five values needed in the learning environment: collaboration, deep learning, reflection, engagement, and caring. Learning takes place in relation with others, through connection (as opposed to isolation) of various course elements, in personal reflection on prior knowledge and lived experience, through engagement with feedback and dialogue, and fostering relationships of acceptance.²⁹ This is most effective when the dialogue is purposefully structured into the curriculum although allowing for organic conversation to develop. Open dialogue gives the space for learners to process what they are learning so that transformation is more likely to be affected. Mezirow surmises that since an individual can never be free of bias, “our greatest assurance of objectivity comes from exposing an expressed idea to rational and reflective discourse.”³⁰

“Holistic orientation” recognizes that learners rarely change through a rational “analyze-think-change” sequence but more likely through a “see-feel-change sequence.”³¹ The whole person, “an affective, intuitive, thinking, physical, spiritual self,” is engaged to foster transformation.³² In evaluating a transformative learning conference held in 2007, Tisdell and Tolliver emphasized the need for openness to varying cultural imaginations. In particular, the use of images that arise out of emotional experiences “can serve as a

²⁹ Debra Langan, Ron Sheese, and Deborah Davidson, “Constructive Teaching and Learning: Collaboration in a Sociology Classroom,” in *Transformative Learning*,” 49.

³⁰ Mezirow, “Critical Reflection,” 10.

³¹ Taylor, “Fostering Transformative Learning,” 10.

³² Taylor, “Fostering Transformative Learning,” 11.

gateway to deeper understanding of one's self on a soul level."³³ The learning environment should be conducive to "whole person learning" including use of various forms of imaginative activities, including story-telling, music, dance, arts, and drama.³⁴

"Awareness of context" involves creating a deeper appreciation and understanding of the past and current surroundings affecting the learners. These include personal, professional, and societal contexts.³⁵ Rather than just acknowledging what context a person has come from and currently operates out of, the awareness of context provides the opportunity for transformative learning, especially those parts of the context that are not healthy. In particular, disturbing events in a person's life provide a fertile ground for transformation.³⁶ The context surrounding a learner can place barriers to transformative change. One of these contexts that is relatively universal is temporal constraints. Transformative learning is a time-consuming process and requires a high level of commitment of the student to carve out the necessary time for the process.³⁷ It also has to be accomplished reflectively, which "requires a hiatus in which to reassess one's ... perspectives and, if necessary, to transform them."³⁸

³³ Tisdell and Tolliver, "Transformative Approaches to Culturally Responsive Teaching," in *Transformative Learning*, 90.

³⁴ Taylor, "Fostering Transformative Learning," 11 and Tisdell and Tolliver, "Transformative Approaches," 91.

³⁵ Taylor, "Fostering Transformative Learning," 11.

³⁶ Mezirow, "Critical Reflection," 13.

³⁷ Taylor, "Fostering Transformative Learning," 12.

³⁸ Mezirow, "Critical Reflection," 13.

“Authentic relationships” is both necessary to and the result of transformative learning.³⁹ Taylor describes transformative learning as emerging from areas of disillusionment and fragmentation in students’ lives.⁴⁰ Mezirow describes the importance of “traumatic learning,” where insight into traumatic life experiences provides openings for transformative learning. The phases of Mezirow’s transformative learning have already indicated that the process can be uncomfortable, especially prior to transformation of the learner (see table 1). Providing a safe environment for authentic relationships is key to helping students address such difficult experiences. Taylor presents a five-facet model leading to authenticity: (1) self-awareness, (2) awareness of needs and interests of learners and teacher, (3) fostering genuineness and openness in the learning environment, (4) awareness of how context affects practice, and (5) full engagement in self-reflection.⁴¹ The curriculum and learning environment should encourage these five facts so that authentic relationships can be developed. Referring again to Mezirow’s phases (see table 1), developing authentic relationships results in new types of relationships and entirely new relationships, including those within the group of learners.

The last element of “authentic relationships” highlights the unique role of the teacher in transformative learning. Mezirow is clear that that transformative learning requires that “we move away from the distorted presupposition that every problem has a correct solution if we could only find the right expert.”⁴² Thus, the teacher functions “as a

³⁹ Taylor, “Fostering Transformative Learning,” 13.

⁴⁰ Taylor, “Fostering Transformative Learning,” 6.

⁴¹ Taylor, “Fostering Transformative Learning,” 13.

⁴² Mezirow, “Critical Reflection,” 15.

facilitator ... rather than as an authority on subject matter.”⁴³ Specifically regarding the process of transformation that requires a reflection on one’s underlying motivating assumptions, the now “facilitator” (rather than “teacher”) models the way of learning.⁴⁴ To do so requires the educator to “make every effort to transfer their authority over the learning group to the group itself as soon as this is feasible, and they become collaborative learners.”⁴⁵

Although a relatively new learning theory, having been introduced by Mezirow in 1978, Kitchenham concludes that transformative learning theory has stood the test of time. Transformative learning has progressed to include a strong theoretical framework for understanding adult learning theory. There is even an international journal, *The Journal of Transformative Education* as well as international conferences. Mezirow passed away in 2012, but he left a strong legacy in transformative learning theory.

Transformative Learning in Ministry

In the ministry context, transformative learning is essentially what Christians are to be about! Rather than simply giving information about Scripture, the Church, or how we are to live, Christians believe in the transformative power of Jesus Christ. The advantage of this Christian context is that, not only are teachers and students working towards transformation, the Holy Spirit is working for transformation in the persons as well.

⁴³ Mezirow, “Transformative Learning,” 11.

⁴⁴ Mezirow, “Learning to Think,” 6.

⁴⁵ Mezirow, “Learning to Think,” 30-1.

Curtis Young, a Presbyterian Minister, focused on transformative learning as applied to ministry in his doctoral work⁴⁶ and reflected on this work in his article “Transformational Learning in Ministry.”⁴⁷ In particular, Young examined the work of James Loder, late professor of practical theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, as a distinctively Christian modification to Mezirow’s transformative learning theory. Freed from the constraints of humanistic secularism, Loder discerned transformational learning as “creational” and “intrinsically spiritual” although “sabotaged by ego-centeredness (sin) and must be transformed by the ... Holy Spirit.”⁴⁸ It is creational in that transformation is structurally a part of God-created human beings as Loder maintains is objectively observable in all the human sciences.⁴⁹ It is spiritual in that transformation is not merely an evolutionary survival instinct but has purposeful intent resulting from being created in God’s image. Secular transformative learning has the purpose of helping adults “realize their potential for becoming more liberated, socially responsible, and autonomous learners.”⁵⁰ However, without a developed understanding of sin as endemic to the human condition, this can lead to disastrous results unless guided by the Holy Spirit.

In regard to this last point, secular transformative learning intentionally moves toward “consensus building” where “a best judgment is based on the broadest consensus

⁴⁶ Young’s 2011 dissertation is entitled “Deep Change: How the Transformational Learning Theories of Mezirow and Loder Apply to Pastoral Ministry.”

⁴⁷ Curtis Young, “Transformational Learning in Ministry,” *Christian Education Journal* Series 3, 10, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 322-338.

⁴⁸ Young, “Transformational Learning,” 325.

⁴⁹ See Young, “Transformational Learning,” 325 referencing James E. Loder, *The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1981), 8-11.

⁵⁰ Mezirow, “Learning to Think,” 30.

possible.”⁵¹ However, the “consensus building” is not grounded in any objective truth and is especially designed to make our frames of reference “more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective.” Transformative learning is a democratic process, yet self-focused as “we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings.”⁵² With the over-emphasis on “we” and “our,” the sabotaging ego-centeredness described by Loder is discerned.

Loder then proposes five steps of transformational learning that are God-centered: “conflict, scanning, convictional experience, release of energy, and interpretation.”⁵³ Convictional experience is also called “constructive act of imagination” by Loder.⁵⁴ The “conflict,” scanning” and “interpretation” steps are similar to phase one, phases two through five, and phases six through eleven, respectively, of Mezirow’s phases of transformative learning (see table 1). The unique steps in Loder’s approach are the convictional experience (or “transforming moment”) and the release of energy (or “celebration”).

The secular transformative learning approach focuses on actions leading up to and following the transformation. Loder, however, emphasizes the “inner dynamic at work at the point of perspective transformation (convictional experience).” Rather than being internally motivated, persons normally experience a new perspective as coming to them, as received rather than derived, or as a realization not a conclusion.⁵⁵ As Young

⁵¹ Mezirow, “Learning to Think,” 12.

⁵² Mezirow, “Learning to Think,” 7-8.

⁵³ Young, “Transformational Learning,” 325-6 adopted from Loder, *Transforming Moment*, 35.

⁵⁴ Loder, *Transforming Moment*, 35.

⁵⁵ Young, “Transformational Learning,” 326.

summarizes, “God created humankind in such a way that all learning comes as a gift to be received ... whether common grace ... or special grace.” This experience will “immediately affect the individual by producing a release of energy that Loder characterizes as celebration.”⁵⁶

Loder uses the example of the two men meeting Christ on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-34) as a model transformative experience. When their eyes were opened to recognize Jesus (verse 31), they responded with a perspective transformation (“Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”) and a release of energy (“And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem.”). As Loder describes their experience: “the broken parts of their lived world had suddenly been reorganized into a new configuration” and “their joy is an ‘aha!’” experience.”⁵⁷

This “aha!” experience is exactly the way that Kruh describes reactions to DBS. “No matter the *Disciple* student’s background, surprises always seem to be in store during the course of study. In *Disciple* circles, these are often referred to as “aha!” moments—those unexpected instants of new insight.”⁵⁸ Kruh quotes one of the DBS participants describing “that euphoric sense of discovery” as the moment when “you don’t own the Bible, the Bible owns you.”⁵⁹ This type of experience, Loder, argues is

⁵⁶ Young, “Transformational Learning,” 327.

⁵⁷ Loder, *Transforming Moment*, 108.

⁵⁸ Kruh, *Disciple Story*, 49.

⁵⁹ Kruh, *Disciple Story*, 48.

externally revealed through the power of the Holy Spirit. This transformation occurs “when one’s very being is graciously recreated by the Holy One.”⁶⁰

Young takes Mezirow’s phases and Loder’s steps to propose five phases of transformational learning in ministry. Phases rather than steps are used since the process is not rigid and can be entered into at any phase and phases may occur out of sequence. Table 2 outlines the Mezirow, Loder, and Young transformation learning process. Young’s approach and descriptions of the transformation process in ministry will be the focus of the following discussion.

The disorienting dilemma is often triggered by suffering such as death, illness, financial stress, regret, or shame. Ironically it can also result from success when a person asks after the celebration, “Is this all there is?”⁶¹ In a learning environment, the disorienting dilemma can be triggered by creating a conflict between one’s assumptions and experience. For instance, a person assuming God does not heal today experiences, sees, or hears testimony about a divine healing. A disorienting dilemma results: “I do not think God miraculously heals today, yet I experienced (or saw or heard about) a divine healing. How do I reconcile these two opposing points of reference?” Young suggests that teachers (or facilitators) play an important role here to “understand their learners and identify the gap between their perspective and reality as described in the Bible.”⁶²

⁶⁰ Loder, *Transforming Moment*, 109.

⁶¹ Young, “Transformational Learning,” 329. For instance, FUMC-McKinney, a successful church might have a disorienting dilemma, “Is there more?”. FUMC-Irving, a declining congregation might have a disorienting dilemma, “What is missing?”. The exploration of these types of disorienting dilemmas in W&P will hopefully open the door for the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the participants and ultimately the church.

⁶² Young, “Transformational Learning,” 331.

Table 2. Mezirow, Loder, and Young Models for Transformative Learning.

Mezirow Phases ⁶³	Loder Steps ⁶⁴	Young Phases ⁶⁵
1. disorienting dilemma	1. conflict	1. disorienting dilemma
2. self-examination 3. critical assessment 4. shared discontent 5. exploration of options	2. scanning	2. journey of desperate hope
	3. convictional experience (or constructive act of imagination)	3. transforming moment
	4. release of energy	4. surge of vitality
6. planning course of action 7. acquisition of knowledge and skills 8. trying new roles 9. building competence and self-confidence 10. reintegration with new perspective 11. altering and/or new relationships	5. interpretation	5. growth

The journey of desperate hope occurs when individuals attempt to resolve the disorienting dilemma. Unlike Mezirow's phases, which are based on humanistic self-reflection (or internally driven liberation), Loder and Young emphasize that this process is internally a spiritual journey. Teachers are sources of expertise and empathy, but Young stresses that "teachers need to be transformational learners themselves." One minister interviewed by Young stated, "It seems to me that one of my roles is to imitate

⁶³ Kitchenham, "Jack Mezirow," 1660.

⁶⁴ Loder. *Transforming Moment*, 35.

⁶⁵ Young, "Transformational Learning," 329-34.

God ..., to be Christ-like.” Young maintains that the learner cannot self-resolve the dilemma and so must be “fuel[ed] with hope to continue their journey. ‘Help me in my unbelief!’ The faithful minister or educator is God’s answer to this cry.” Unlike Mezirow, who seeks to build the ego, Young affirms that “to receive from God, the ego first must be defeated.”⁶⁶

The transforming moment was described by ministers in Young’s study as an “Aha! Moment” or even “Let there be light!” This transforming moment is “not experienced as a linear-horizontal progression in thought, but as a vertical shift Godward. The experience is neither objective nor subjective but transcendent.” The shift in frame of reference is from less ego-centered to more Christ-centered. Unlike the consensus approach of Mezirow, Young suggests that Scripture becomes the source of transformation and the experience is not subjective but transcendent. As Young states, “when the new realization comes, it comes as truth, not merely as ‘true’.” The learner is encouraged to “see reality in light of God’s truth, rather than as they assume it to be.”⁶⁷

Ministers in Young’s study went beyond Loder’s temporary “release of energy” that accompanies a transforming moment. Rather than momentary, there was a “‘tremendous burst of spiritual energy’ and ‘an overflow, a stretching of growth and faith’.” Not only is the presenting “disorienting dilemma” resolved, but the surge of vitality effects the person beyond the circumstances of the crisis. The person feels a new

⁶⁶ Young, “Transformational Learning,” 329-30.

⁶⁷ Young, “Transformational Learning,” 331-2.

vitality that stems from repentance and new birth.⁶⁸ This can be considered an encounter with the power of the Holy Spirit that is life transforming.

The last phase of growth launches the transformed person's life on a new trajectory that is long lasting. Mezirow's phases six through eleven (see table 2) provide some possibilities for this new trajectory. However, Young's view is that the transformation is "not self-generated, but generative. It is experienced as life-giving and life-guiding."⁶⁹ Mezirow's phase eleven ("altering and/or new relationships") turns out to be the most important, although in a way totally unexpected by his secular approach. The relationship that is either new or altered is the ultimate relationship with God. Learners truly see beyond their own egos into the love and power of God in their lives. This love and power overflows into love of others in new and Spirit-empowered ways.

Transformative Learning Applied to Bible Study

Bible study is typically conducted as an information-driven group where learning more about faith is the purpose.⁷⁰ However, this is not the stated case of either DBS or W&P, which are intended to be transformational rather than informational. Young alludes to the fact that the divinely inspired Bible "by its nature creates dilemmas, compels spiritual journeying, convicts with new perspectives, infuses new vitality, and fosters growth"⁷¹ (see table 2). Therefore, the Bible inherently fosters transformational learning. As such, Bible study should be transformational in nature. Transformational

⁶⁸ Young, "Transformational Learning," 332-3.

⁶⁹ Young, "Transformational Learning," 333-4.

⁷⁰ See Watson, *Class Meeting*, 5-6.

⁷¹ Young, "Transformational Learning," 335.

Bible study is the focus herein. This type of study cannot be assumed and, indeed, requires intentionality, intentionality that begins with the learner.

In the secular terminology of humanistic learning theories, academic fieldwork coordinators at Thomas Jefferson University, Susan Santalucia and Caryn Johnson, state: “Learning is voluntary in that the student must be willing to engage in critical self-reflection [and] ... be self-directed in order to take the steps to examine their own beliefs, assumptions, and perspectives, as well as to actively participate in discussion related to self-examination [including] ... sharing experiences with others via discourse.”⁷² This is what is expected of DBS and W&P participants for transformation to occur. Both internal engagement with one’s own soul and engagement with others going through the process are necessary. However, these engagements are empowered by the work of the Holy Spirit in the individual and the group.

The intentionality must continue with the teacher/facilitator. Transformative learning asks for the teaching environment to be learner-centered rather than teacher-centered. In this approach, the teacher is facilitator rather than instructor. Students bring their experiences to the table in the learning environment and these experiences become the basis for their transformation. Turning to Taylor’s core elements of transformative learning, the Bible study participants are expected to bring their personal experiences to the discussion. In addition, the Bible study itself should foster experiences in the participants.

⁷² Susan Santalucia and Caryn R. Johnson, “Transformative Learning: Facilitating Growth and Change Through Fieldwork,” *OT Practice* 15, no. 19 (October 2010): CE-1–CE-8. Accessed November 17, 2018. <https://www.duq.edu/assets/Documents/occupational-therapy/Fieldwork-Education/Suggested%20Readings/Transformative%20Learning.pdf>.

The other items in Taylor's core elements are also applicable to Bible study.

Regarding "critical reflection," there are certainly many "what" and "how" questions that arise in studying Scripture, but the foundational question is the "why" question. The "why" question focuses on the primary presupposition of life. In our faith, God is the ultimate answer to the "why" question. The Holy Spirit gifts the motivation and energy to the actions that are the answers to the "what" and "how" questions. Transformational Bible study allows participants to engage in critical reflection so as to explore, and hopefully answer, the "why" question in their lives.

Taylor's "dialogue," "holistic orientation," "awareness of context," and "authentic relationships" are driven by the learning environment created in the Bible study. With a facilitator rather than expert instructor, dialogue between participants is encouraged. Holistic orientation is achieved through Bible study activities that engage more than just the thinking process, including story-telling, prayers, activities, and worship. Context awareness empathetically recognizes that each of the participants has their own histories and experiences, which may either help or hinder their relationship with God and others. Because of the forgiveness offered through Christ Jesus, there is hope and freedom in confession. Finally, the most authentic relationship possible is with Christ who is fully sympathetic with our weakness because he was tempted as we are (Heb 4:15). Thus, participants are to be encouraged in Bible study to pursue authentic relationships through activities such as praying for and with each other. The facilitators of transformative Bible studies are called upon to model this authenticity behavior both in their displayed relationship with God and their engagement in relationship with the participants.

The two phases of transforming moment and surge of vitality in the model for transformative learning are dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit. Since the “aha!” transforming moments are externally produced, a transformational Bible study should provide an expectation that the Holy Spirit is working in participants’ lives. Expectation for this can be enhanced as facilitator and participants are encouraged to share personal stories of transforming moments. Transformational Bible studies are meant to result in lives that are actively lived out as a result of the transformation. For instance, DBS intentionally expects, via the subtitle, for participants *Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study*. This becoming disciples is only possible with the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the participants giving them a lifelong “surge of vitality.” A transformational Bible study is not a one-and-done event, but is a life changing once-and-for-all experience.

Conclusion

In his later years, John Wesley voiced a concern that, although the people called Methodists would continue, they “should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power.” He goes on to write that “this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out.”⁷³ The doctrine was based on the Bible as “the whole and sole rule both of Christian faith and practice” from which Methodists learn four basic principles: (1) religion is an inward principle, which is the “renewal of the soul after the image of God,” (2) this renewal is only accomplished through “the power of the Holy Ghost,” (3) that “we

⁷³ John Wesley, “Thoughts Upon Methodism (1786),” *Works* vol. 9, 527. Here Wesley is referencing 2 Tim 3:5, “... having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.”

receive this and every other blessing merely for the sake of Christ,” and (4) that there is to be ecumenical unity in that “whoever hath the mind that was in Christ ... is our brother, and sister, and mother.”⁷⁴ The solution Wesley offers in this essay includes class and band meetings, which are biblically based, Spirit-driven, small groups in which transformation⁷⁵ takes place.

Thus, transformational Bible study is at the heart of Methodism, even if this heart has been often neglected or forgotten. DBS was designed intentionally to address this problem. In DBS there is an explicit call for “persons to submit themselves to examination by Scripture, to put themselves under the power of God’s word, and to be changed by God’s word.”⁷⁶ DBS has been successful in this venture with more than a million participants in several languages and over thirty denominations throughout the world. As Bishop Wilke exclaims, DBS is credited with “inspiring untold numbers to go into the ministry, and transforming countless individual lives.”⁷⁷

Whether intentional or not, transformative learning principles are inherently present in the design of DBS. The teacher is called to be a facilitator, a “learner among learners.”⁷⁸ An examination of Mezirow’s eleven phases (see table 1 or 2) reveals that DBS provides an environment in which these phases are fostered. For instance, eminent

⁷⁴ Wesley, “Thoughts,” *Works*, vol. 9, 527.

⁷⁵ Wesley refers to this as “going on to perfection” (Wesley, “Thoughts,” *Works*, vol. 9, 529). Christian perfection, according to Wesley, was loving God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength (Mark 12:30), which results in loving neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:33). For a more detailed understanding of Wesley’s view on Christian perfection see his seminal work on the subject, “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection” in *Works*, vol. 13, 132-191.

⁷⁶ Nellie M. Moser, ed., *Disciple: Becoming Disciple Through Bible Study, Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1987), 6.

⁷⁷ Wilke, “Foreword,” in *Disciple Story*, xi.

⁷⁸ “What is a Disciple?” *Disciple Training Video*.

Methodist theologian Albert Outler is credited with having each lesson of DBS include “Our Human Condition,” which describes some aspect of humanity’s sinful nature. Thus a disorienting dilemma (phase one) is presented in each lesson and “the idea of personal transformation” introduced, which would set DBS apart from other studies.⁷⁹ Through group and sub-group discussion in DBS, opportunities are intentionally provided for such Mezirow phases as shared discontent (phase four), exploration of options (phase five), trying new roles (phase eight), and altered/new relationships (phase eleven). Homework questions encourage participants to have time for self-examination (phase two) and critical assessment (phase three) of their walk with God. The “Bible Teaching” sections help provide materials to plan new courses of action (phase six), and acquisition of knowledge and skills (phase seven). As the class grows together over thirty-four weeks, building competence and self-confidence (phase nine) in discipleship and reintegration with new perspective (phase ten) into family and community is encouraged and checked along the way.

W&P maintains these elements of transformational Bible study. In DBS, Young’s transforming moment and surge of vitality phases (compared to Loder’s convictional experience and release of energy steps) is hoped for as God works in the lives of the participants. In W&P, there is a more intentional effort to explicitly expect and include the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the participants. In particular, the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit is overtly presented and discussed as God’s power is revealed in Scripture and the lives of the participants.

⁷⁹ Kruh, *Disciple Story*, 39.

DBS used the sinful nature of humanity as a recurring disorienting dilemma.

While not losing this dimension, W&P also presents the disorienting dilemma of increasing the supernatural understanding, practice and ministry of participants. The frame of reference that does not include the present supernatural work of God in the lives of the participants is challenged through W&P. However, because the elements of transformational Bible study that exist in DBS are continued, transformational learning towards the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit is expected in the participants. Of course, this is dependent upon the Holy Spirit showing up!

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

The first draft of “Word and Power” was written while I was serving at FUMC-McKinney. A larger than typical class (twenty-five students) went through this first draft of the entire thirty-four week curriculum. For this DMin project, conducted three months after I started as the Senior Pastor at FUMC Irving, a second draft of six weeks of the W&P curriculum was used along with the corresponding weeks from the DBS curriculum. The foci of this chapter are outlining the DMin project, analyzing data gathered from the DBS and W&P project participants, and presenting a summary of learnings especially with respect to the project hypothesis. As a reminder, the hypothesis of this project is that the implementation of a portion of W&P will increase the supernatural understanding, practice, and ministry of the participants in comparison to participants in the corresponding portion of DBS.

The overarching theme is how to introduce the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit into a United Methodist church through W&P. It is telling that both FUMC-McKinney and FUMC-Irving were open to this modification of DBS. Both a growing church with a presently strong program in the *Disciple* series as well as a declining church that has not taught one of the *Disciple* series in over ten years were open to W&P. This bodes well (anecdotally) for introducing W&P into United Methodist churches.

Description of the Project

The project was conducted during the course of one semester of the DMin program (Fall 2019). DBS is a thirty-four week class that is typically taught over the two semesters of a school calendar year. W&P is also designed to be a full thirty-four week study. However, to test the effectiveness of W&P within the timetable of a DMin, a sample six weeks from both DBS and W&P were used for the project.

DBS is designed to be facilitated (not “taught”) by a layperson or clergy who has been through the study. The model of having a facilitator was followed for W&P as well. This facilitator approach will also aid the propagation of the W&P into other churches. For the DMin project I served as the facilitator for both DBS and W&P. I strove to be mindful of being a facilitator for both, rather than acting as a “teacher.” Following the analysis of First Thessalonians, the work of the Holy Spirit in John Wesley’s life, and the discussion of transformative learning, facilitators of W&P are critical to the process. They must be open to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in their lives and willing to be transformed through the process of W&P. The knowledge, practice, and ministry in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in the facilitators should also grow through their participation in W&P.

Participants for the DMin project classes voluntarily signed up before or after two weeks of worship services at FUMC-Irving. All were members of FUMC-Irving except for one participant of W&P who attended another church but had sisters from FUMC-Irving taking the class. The DBS class started with thirteen and the W&P class started

with twelve adults.¹ Participants initially signed up for one of two course times without knowledge of which time was for DBS and which was for W&P. Before the first class, one participant had to switch classes due to a scheduling conflict. The commitment level of FUMC-Irving participants was evident as only one DBS participant had to drop after the first week. Thus for the project, the DBS class had eleven participants and the W&P class had thirteen participants. Attendance was very strong in both classes and participants usually only missed if they were out of town, which was rare.

The DBS curriculum is an existing publication by Abingdon Press that was originally published in 1987. The curriculum used in the project was the second edition published in 1993. The study consists of a written curriculum (“Study Manual”) for each participant with seven days of assignments for each week’s lesson. The assignments for the first five days are usually the Scripture readings, the sixth day is the written curriculum commentary called “The Bible Teaching” and “Marks of Discipleship,” and the seventh day is the class meeting.² The facilitator has “Teacher Helps”³ and weekly video lessons⁴. The class meeting is conducted over two and one-half hours with a brief break in the middle. A sample week (lesson 2) of the DBS study manual is shown in Appendix C.

¹ DBS is designed for adult participants, which is also the design of W&P. There is a *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study, Study Manual Youth Edition* available.

² Richard B. Wilke and Julia K. Wilke, *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study, Study Manual* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993).

³ Olson, Harriett, J., ed., *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study, Teacher Helps*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005).

⁴ *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study, Revised Videos 2005*, Disks One and Two (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), DVD.

The classroom time for DBS is typically divided up as follows: five minutes for gathering and opening prayer, twenty minutes for the video and discussion, fifty minutes for discussion of Scripture and study manual, ten minutes for a break, forty minutes for an in depth look at a small passage (“Encounter the Word”), twenty minutes for discussing the “Marks of Discipleship,” and five minutes for the closing prayer time.⁵ There are modifications to this basic outline depending upon the week, but the “Study Manual” and “Teacher Helps” give direct instructions regarding any changes. For this project, the “Teaching Helps” instructions given for each of the selected six lessons were strictly followed by the facilitator both in terms of content and time allotted.

The W&P curriculum has a similar format to the original DBS course. A video will eventually be produced for the to-be-(hopefully)-published thirty-four week W&P curriculum. For this project the “video” was given live in lecture format with participants instructed not to interrupt or ask questions until the end to simulate a video format. Due to the emphasis on the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in W&P, the lecture had a different emphasis than the DBS video. In the study manual for W&P the DBS section called “Marks of Discipleship” is renamed “Connecting With God.” A sample week (lesson 2) of the W&P student study manual is shown in Appendix D.

The classroom time for W&P is typically divided up as follows: five minutes for gathering and opening prayer, twenty minutes for the video and discussion, fifty minutes for discussion of Scripture and study manual, ten minutes for a break, fifty-five minutes for the “Connecting With God” section, and ten minutes for the closing prayer time. More time is allotted for prayer at the end of W&P so that participants can fully share

⁵ Olson, *Disciple, Teacher Helps*, 6.

prayer concerns and still allow time for more than just a short closing prayer. Table 3 outlines the basic time allocations for both DBS and W&P.

The “Connecting With God” section of W&P is similar to the “Marks of Discipleship” in the original study as it directs participants toward the practical application of the Scripture read during the week. However, in W&P, the “Connecting With God” section usually contains some practices that can be discussed or even implemented during the class time. Some of these topics that correspond with the Scripture reading included soaking prayer, time of anointing, and practice in the prophetic. Many of the weekly lessons have directions on practicing supernatural ministry during the following week.

Table 3. General Outline of DBS and W&P Group Meeting Plans

Section	<i>Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study</i>	“Word and Power”
Gathering and Prayer	5 minutes	5 minutes
Video/Lecture and Discussion	20 minutes (10-12 minutes for video)	20 minutes (10-12 minutes for video)
Scripture and Study Manual	50 minutes	50 minutes
Break	10 minutes	10 minutes
Encounter the Word	40 minutes	N/A
Marks of Discipleship	20 minutes	N/A
Connecting With God	N/A	55 minutes
Closing Prayer	5 minutes	10 minutes
Total Time	2 hours 30 minutes	2 hours 30 minutes

DBS and W&P Curricula for the Project

The six weeks of the project covered essentially the same biblical material between the DBS and W&P sessions, as shown in table 4. Since both the thirty-four week curriculum of both DBS and W&P are evenly divided between the Old Testament and the New Testament, this project included three lessons each from the Old and New Testaments. Theoretically, any lessons could have been selected. However, in practice, lessons for the DMin project were chosen for being “stand alone” in that they did not require a build-up of the previous lessons to generally comprehend the material.

Table 4. DBS and W&P Lessons Used in DMin Project

Lesson Week	<i>Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study</i>	“Word and Power”
Pre-Week	Outline course approach Hand out Lesson 2 Homework Complete Pre-Survey	Outline course approach Hand out Lesson 2 Homework Complete Pre-Survey
1	Lesson 2: Wonder Genesis 1-2; Psalms 8, 19, 104, 150; Job 38-41; John 1:1-5	Lesson 2: Creating Word Genesis 1-2; Psalm 19, 104; Job 38-39; John 1:1-5; Colossians 1:13-20
2	Lesson 5: Deliverance Exodus 1-18; Psalm 105	Lesson 5: Miracles Exodus 1-17
3	Lesson 13: Worship Psalms 136, 78, 90, 137, 42, 43, 22, 130, 38, 51, 65, 116, 104, 100, 145, 73, 127, 133, 23	Lesson 13: God’s Presence Psalms 100, 104, 135, 150, 90, 137, 42, 22, 130, 38, 51, 107, 116, 73, 127, 133, 23
4	Lesson 20: Good News Mark 1-16	Lesson 20: Power of Christ Mark 1-16
5	Lesson 24: Power Acts 1-15	Lesson 24: Filled with the Spirit Acts 1-15
6	Lesson 27: Love 1 Corinthians 1-16; 2 Corinthians 3-5	Lesson 27: Spiritual Gifts 1 Corinthians 1-16 2 Corinthians 3-5
Post-Week	Concluding Discussion Holy Communion Complete Post-Survey	Concluding Discussion Holy Communion Complete Post-Survey

The lessons on Acts 1-15 (lesson 24) and 1 Corinthians (lesson 27) were selected since these are really the only lessons in DBS that talk specifically about the Holy Spirit. This actually provides the best opportunity for DBS participants to encounter the work of the Holy Spirit directly through the curriculum. Thus, the comparison in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit as taught in DBS and W&P was anticipated to be the most clear.

As seen in comparing Appendix C and Appendix D, the layout style of W&P was kept similar to the style of DBS. This is intentional for ease of introduction of W&P into churches that are familiar with DBS. Of course, before W&P can be used outside of this DMin project, copyright issues and other publishing issues must be resolved with Abingdon Press, the publisher of the *Disciple* series. There is no intent with this project to violate copyright or other legal restrictions. Therefore, the draft W&P study is only intended for research purposes at the present time.

As shown in comparing Appendix C with Appendix D, the lesson 2 biblical material covered in DBS and W&P is almost identical. This is true for all of the lessons. The participants for both studies almost always read the Scripture assignments first during the homework assignments for the week. This allows for the participants to encounter the biblical Word first. Therefore, understanding the biblical text is of primary importance in both DBS and W&P. However, in W&P, the stated intention is that the power of God will be encountered in Scripture and the question of whether the power of God similarly shows up in the participant's life is explored. For this draft of W&P, some of the same material in the DBS "Bible Teaching" remains, however there is new material in W&P as well as a different emphasis in the teaching. W&P at this stage in the development is a modification to DBS, not a complete rework.

As part of this modification, two recurring questions asked in the “Connecting with God” section of W&P are: “How do you see the Power of God working in this Scripture passage?” and “How does the Power of God work similarly today?”. These general questions are crafted to the lesson. As an example, lesson 2 of W&P on creation asks about the creative power of God.

W&P also contains different exercises and often different questions than DBS. Using lesson 2 as the example, DBS in the “Marks of Discipleship” section points to us belonging to God and how our lives reflect this in praising God in creation, caring for God’s creation, and keeping the Sabbath in deference to God’s order of creation.⁶ W&P considers the power of God at work in creation. In the W&P lesson 2, this is emphasized with two exercises. First, in DBS there is an optional exercise (in the “If You Want to Know More”) section to walk outdoors. The instructions for this exercise are to “be aware of the sky, the trees, the water” by watching, listening and feeling and “from time to time say, ‘Thank you, God’”.⁷ In W&P this becomes a required exercise with the directions to “be open to seeing the wonder of God in creation” and to “watch, listen, and feel for the presence of God.” The emphasis is shifted from trying to become more aware of God’s creation in DBS to trying to become more aware of the presence of the Creator God in W&P. Second, there is an additional exercise in the W&P “Bible Teaching” section on “breath” prayers. This plays off the theme of the breath of God breathing life into Adam in creation and this same breath of God in the Holy Spirit breathing into us as well. The breath prayer is described and then is to be practiced by the participant in the

⁶ Wilke and Wilke, *Disciple, Study Manual*, 19.

⁷ Wilke and Wilke, *Disciple, Study Manual*, 19.

homework for the week. The hope is that this begins to open the participants in W&P to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

When the participants gather for the class sessions, the emphasis of W&P is maintained. For instance, the DBS video that covers the creation stories of Genesis 1–2 (lesson 2) emphasizes “the theological nature of the Creation story, how the Creation story became Creation faith, and how the two Creation accounts together express Israel’s Creation faith.”⁸ In W&P, the lecture emphasizes the creative work of God through Word and Spirit, that God’s creative Word speaks to us today, and that the same Spirit of God can fill us with life today. The work of the Holy Spirit in Creation and the continued creative work of the Holy Spirit in us is highlighted in W&P.

The class session following the video/lecture continues to show the modification of W&P with respect to DBS. In DBS, the class discussion in lesson 2 is directed towards talking about the Scripture readings for the week, exploring the meaning of Sabbath, and comparing the two creation stories. DBS also asks participants to talk about the “theme of wonder” in the daily Scripture. W&P also has participants walk through their Bible readings from days 1 to 5 of the home study, although with some direction towards God’s power displayed in creation. The real difference, however, occurs in the “Connecting With God” section where W&P participants are directed to encounter the wonder of God rather than simply talk about it. In lesson 2, W&P participants share their experiences from their walk with God exercise and discuss the questions about the power of God in Scripture and in their lives. Finally, there is an in-class exercise with the “breath prayer.” Participants are then encouraged to share from their home experience and/or class

⁸ Olson, *Disciple, Teacher Helps*, 51.

experience their connection with God through this prayer and how God seemed to relate to them in this prayer time.

Similar modifications focusing on the knowledge, practice, and ministry of the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit occurs throughout the W&P curriculum. Reading and understanding the scriptural text remains present in both DBS and W&P. The transformational nature of DBS is maintained in W&P through class interaction and discussion on how the Scripture applies to the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ. This is the “Word” emphasis. W&P, however, adds in the “Power” portion through the “Bible Teaching” section, the lecture, and the exercises (home and in-class) to increase the knowledge, practice, and ministry of the work of the Holy Spirit. Table 5 shows a brief comparison of the types of differences in the in-class exercises between DBS and W&P for the six lessons used in this project. The comparison of table 5 is between the “Encounter the Word” section of DBS and the “Connecting With God” section of W&P.

The emphasis on knowing more about the Scripture in DBS is readily seen in comparison with the emphasis on the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit in W&P. For instance, in lesson 24, which includes the reading of the story of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-41), DBS focuses in the exercise on the controversial story of Ananias and Sapphira while W&P focuses on receiving the Holy Spirit, through an anointing exercise. In lesson 27, DBS focuses on other controversies mentioned in the biblical text of First Corinthians while W&P involves the practice of one of the spiritual gifts, prophecy (see 1 Cor. 14:1). The exercises of W&P bring in the power of God through the work of the Holy Spirit much more directly.

Table 5. DBS and W&P In-Class Exercises for the DMin Project Lessons

Week (Lesson)	DBS “Encounter the Word” ⁹	W&P “Connection with God”
Week 1 (Lesson 2)	Scripture Memorization (Memorize Psalm 8 or 100)	Breath Prayer (In the Presence of God)
Week 2 (Lesson 5)	Meaning of Scripture: Central idea, meaning for church meaning for individual (Exodus 3:1-4:17)	Soaking Prayer (Listening to God)
Week 3 (Lesson 13)	What Scripture Says: About God, us, God and us (Psalm 22)	Praying a Psalm (Letting Scripture Speak)
Week 4 (Lesson 20)	Mental Drama of Scripture: think, feel, imagine Mark 9:2-13	Evangelism Story (Writing God-Story to Share)
Week 5 (Lesson 24)	What Scripture Says: About God, us, God and us (Acts 4:32-5:11)	Anointing Impartation (Receiving the Holy Spirit)
Week 6 (Lesson 27)	Rewrite Passage in Own Words (1 Corinthians 10:1-13 or 3:1-23)	Practicing Prophecy (Praying Over Others)

Research Methods for the Project

In order to test the hypothesis that implementing W&P will increase the supernatural understanding, practice, and ministry of the participants, a sample W&P class was examined in comparison to a control group of participants in a parallel DBS class. Normally, both studies would be led by a facilitator who fully participates in the study. However, for this DMin study, I was the facilitator for both the DBS and W&P groups and therefore was not counted as part of the class for group data collection and evaluation. Therefore, in this section it is assumed that “participants” includes the participants of the courses and excludes the facilitator.

⁹ Olson, *Disciple, Teacher Helps*, 17, 20, 28, 36, 40, 43.

The three main methods used to triangulate qualitative results from the participants are pre- and post-surveys, weekly notes and journals and observations from in-class discussions, and post-course verbal interviews. Prior to the first class meetings, participants were given the first week's lesson, which had daily homework assignments and the pre-course survey (Appendix E). The study manuals for the DBS and W&P lessons include places for participants to take notes on the material and write responses to various curriculum questions. In addition, although not part of either curriculum, participants were asked to journal any thoughts they had at the conclusion of each session. Participants were made aware that their written responses in the study manuals and the journal pages were to be collected at the end of the course for confidential evaluation. A follow-up session week included a service of Holy Communion and time to complete the post-course survey (Appendix F). Within one week of the conclusion of the final gathering class, all of the participants were individually interviewed using a set of post-course questions (Appendix G). In addition, notes of observations made by the context associates and myself during the six weeks were collected.

Regarding the in-class observations, the context associates were selected from members of the FUMC-Irving. Two context associates participated in the project, one each in the DBS and the W&P sessions. They were full participants in the study, however, they were also asked to write down observations during the class discussion. As the facilitator in both classes, I also made observations providing comparison and verification with the context associate's observations. The curricula for both DBS and W&P have scheduled class time when the participants are divided into twos or threes for discussion or practice. It was not possible to directly observe all of these subgroups;

however, the subgroups were usually asked to report to the larger class what was discussed and/or experienced.

An analysis of the pre- and post-survey responses, the study manual responses and weekly journal entries, course observations, and the post-course interview provided personal accounts of the effect of the courses on the participants. To reiterate, the primary objective was to determine whether the W&P curriculum increased the supernatural understanding, practice and ministry of the participants, especially in contrast to the existing DBS curriculum. The analysis looked for whether there was consistency across the various types of data collection with regard to this primary objective.

There were two general areas of interest that the surveys and interviews probed. The DBS curriculum is “designed to develop biblically nourished persons committed to discipleship. ... DISCIPLE guides small groups of persons to submit themselves to examination by Scripture, to put themselves under the power of God’s Word, and to be changed by God’s Word.”¹⁰ The W&P curriculum is designed to incorporate this purpose (“Word”) and also increase supernatural understanding, practice and ministry (“Power”). Thus some of the questions were designed to determine the growth in biblical knowledge and transformation of the persons through the study of Scripture (“Word”). Other questions were designed to determine the increase, if any, in the supernatural understanding, practice, and ministry of the participants (“Power”).

In the discussion of the data from the participants, names are not used. Non-essential details that could be used to identify a participant have been either omitted or changed to protect anonymity. As necessary, participants of the DBS study are identified

¹⁰ Mark Price, *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study, Implementation Guide*, revised (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 3.

by PD# (where # represents the participant number 1 to 11) and participants of the W&P study are identified by PW# (where # represents the participant number 1 to 13).

Data from Pre- and Post-Surveys

Data from the pre- and post-surveys were compared to determine if participants experienced any differences after their participation in this study and if there were any noticeable differences in the results between the DBS and W&P participants. For those questions with a possible numerical answer from one to ten (1 to 10), the responses of the participants in DBS were added together for each question and the same for W&P participants. The results were categorized between questions relating to biblical growth (i.e., “Word”), those relating to growth in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit (i.e., “Power”), and those relating to overall spiritual health. All eleven DBS participants completed the pre- and post-surveys. However, one of the thirteen W&P participants (PW13) did not complete the pre-survey¹¹ and therefore his post-survey results are not included in this evaluation. For the survey results only, eleven DBS participants and twelve W&P participants are included.

Before examining the data results, a view of the DBS and W&P participants from the demographic parts of the surveys is appropriate. There is a certain uniformity among the participants. All are Caucasian, and most are senior citizens. The DBS class had an average age of seventy with the youngest participant close to fifty years old. The W&P class had average age of seventy-one with the youngest participant close to fifty-five years old. All participants were members of FUMC-Irving except for one in the W&P

¹¹ PW13 was a substitution when an original member had to drop out before the first lesson.

group who is a member of a local Baptist church but had two sisters in the W&P group. All participants, except for one, indicated they are Christians with an average length of their declared faith being forty-three years for the DBS participants and fifty-three years for the W&P participants. The minimum number of years of declared Christianity is ten years for one DBS participant (PD5) with the addition of one participant each in DBS and W&P with twenty years of declared faith. W&P participant PW8 indicated in the pre-survey that she was not sure she was a Christian. In the post-survey, she indicated that she was a Christian and had been one for well over seventy years. If nothing else, her participation in W&P may have given her an assurance of faith that she did not have previously.

Both DBS and W&P are designed as Bible studies to increase biblical understanding. In addition, there are intentional elements of transformative learning (see chapter 5) in both studies in which the participants are meant to be different as a result of their active involvement in the studies. Although certainly not comprehensive, there were a few questions in the surveys directed towards whether the participants were biblically transformed. Table 6 lists the scaled questions that address these “Word” results. Through the six weeks there was relatively little change in the DBS participants (less than 10% for all questions). The W&P participants indicated a significant positive growth in two of the four questions (greater than 10%)¹². Overall, the W&P participants experienced a greater growth in biblically-focused transformation.

¹² A change 10% or less is considered negligible as this would mean an average move of less than one (on the scale of one to ten) for each participant.

Table 6. Pre- and Post-Survey “Word” Results

Questions	DBS % Change	W&P % Change	Difference in % (W&P% – DBS%)
7. How well do you know the Bible?	2%	6%	5%
8. How often does God speak to you through the Bible?	6%	25%	19%
10. Does the Bible guide you in your daily life?	5%	17%	11%
11. How often do you consciously recall a biblical verse, story, or idea in the course of your daily life?	-2%	5%	7%

Six weeks of a study meant to be thirty-four weeks in length is not enough time to fully see the impact of the growth in biblical knowledge and application in a person’s life. This would be true for both DBS and W&P. There does seem to be an indication that W&P does open up the participants more to having God speak to them through the Scripture and for their lives to be guided by the Scripture. Questions more focused on how well participants understand the biblical text read in each lesson would have been interesting to compare between DBS and W&P participants. However, the direction of this study was towards how the Scripture translated into practical application rather than simply biblical knowledge. These results should not be used to judge how effective DBS is in the stated goal of the subtitle, *Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study*.

The survey results that compared the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in participants clearly showed that W&P fulfilled the stated objective. The pre- and post-course results for questions directed towards the “Power” aspects of the study are shown in table 7. Regarding practice in the supernatural works of the Holy Spirit, questions 13, 14a, and 14d indicated significant increase in W&P participants. W&P participants had

especially dramatic results (around 50% increase overall) in the areas of a “knowing” from God (14a) and an “insight” from God about a specific situation (14d) as opposed to decreases in these areas for the DBS group.

Table 7. Pre- and Post-Survey “Power” Results

Questions	DBS % Change	W&P % Change	Difference in % (W&P %- DBS %)
13. How often does God speak to you through thoughts or feelings?	+8%	+15%	+7%
How many times in the last month did you experience the following?			
14a. A “knowing” about someone or something that came from God.	-12%	+49%	+60%
14b. Having God give you specific words to speak to someone.	-11%	+47%	+58%
14c. Praying directly with someone for their healing (physical, emotional, or spiritual).	+11%	+13%	+1%
14d. An “insight” into a specific situation that came from God.	-2%	+51%	+53%
14e. An unusual event which seemed well beyond random chance.	-25%	+46%	+71%

The W&P group also showed an increase in ministry towards others. The increase over the DBS group was especially dramatic in words of knowledge, a “knowing about someone or something that came from God (14b). There was a decrease in this area in the DBS group while a large increase (47%) in the W&P group. Question 14c is interesting in that it asks for participants to proactively engage in the ministry of the supernatural

works of the Holy Spirit by praying directly with someone for healing. Both the DBS and W&P participants indicated an overall increase in this ministry, which is encouraging, however the increase was modest.

Questions 14e asked about an unusual event that could be identified as a miracle (although this word was not used in the question). There was a dramatic increase (46%) in the W&P group while there was a large decrease (-25%) in the DBS group. One possibility for this is that when DBS participants read about the amazing miracles in the Scripture reading, their personal basis for what is an “unusual event” may have changed.

The results shown in table 7 overwhelmingly agree with the hypothesis that the implementation of a portion of W&P will increase the supernatural understanding, practice, and ministry of the participants in comparison to participants in the corresponding portion of DBS. The third column of table 7 shows the increase (or decrease) in overall percentage change between the DBS and W&P courses. Especially in the four areas of “knowing,” specific words, “insight,” and unusual events the increase in the W&P group over the DBS group was large (between 53% and 71%). The exciting part of these results is that they occurred within a six-week portion of a normally thirty-four week class.

Table 8 shows survey results that addressed the overall self-identified spiritual health of the participants. Overall there was very little self-identified change indicated. For the DBS participants, the average pre-survey responses for questions 2, 3, and 4 were 7.9, 7.3, and 9.0, respectively, on a top scale of 10. For the W&P participants the average pre-survey responses for these questions were 6.8, 6.4, and 6.9, respectively. This means that there was not a lot of room for self-identified growth. Even though there was little

change in either group, their responses indicate an overall sense of good spiritual health that existed prior to the class start and was at least maintained through the classes.

Table 8. Pre- and Post-Survey “Spiritual Health” Results

Questions	DBS % Change	W&P % Change	Difference in % (W&P% – DBS%)
2. What is the present condition of your spiritual life?	-2%	0%	2%
3. How often do you pray?	13%	9%	-4%
4. How often do you worship?	-5%	13%	18%

All the participants indicated they prayed about the same (+/- 1 on the scale) or more by the end of the DBS and W&P classes. DBS participant, PD11, increased her prayer frequency from a 3 (less than daily) to a 10 (all the time). The W&P participant, PW8, who questioned whether she was a Christian in her pre-survey, not only was sure of her faith at the conclusion but had also increased her prayer frequency from daily (5) to all the time (10). All the participants, except for one, indicated that they worshiped weekly (presumably on Sunday morning) or more (presumably with a broader definition of what “worship” means). The one exception, PW9, increased her frequency of worship to weekly by the end of the study.

In addition to the pre-survey questions that were all repeated, the post-survey also included some open-ended questions (see Appendix F). These open-ended questions provide another view on how DBS and W&P were received by participants. Open-ended questions allow participants to give a written indication of how they were affected by the studies. Of course, how open-ended questions are answered is also reflective of the

personalities of the participants (for instance, some like to answer questions like these and others do not).

The first open-ended question asked, “How has your understanding of hearing God changed through this study?” There was no real difference between DBS and W&P in the numbers of those who indicated a change. Seven of the eleven (64%) DBS participants and eight of the twelve (67%) W&P participants indicated some change. The type of answers were remarkably different, however. In DBS, five of the responses leaned more towards head knowledge: “made me want to listen and study more,” “choosing a [biblical] character to identify with,” “there is great responsibility in living the life all the time,” “not to over-analyze,” and “yes.” The other two DBS responses leaned more towards the work of the Holy Spirit: “encouraged me to reconnect with the power of the Holy Spirit” and “brought me closer to God.”

Only one of the W&P responses to this question leaned towards head knowledge. PW3 wrote his understanding of hearing changed towards the “practical side of living in Christ.” The other seven written answers leaned more towards heart-felt responses: “not just voice, but vision or feeling,” “more intentional time in listening for God's voice in prayer,” “helped understand God's power and working through the Holy Spirit,” “listen with your heart to God,” “God is always there, I just need to ask,” “more focused in my praying,” and “be more open to Him - make prayer more of a conversation.” The transformational impact of DBS on participants was affirmed in this question. At the same time, the growth towards the work of the Holy Spirit in W&P was also affirmed.

The second question asked, “Describe an experience of how God spoke to you through a Bible reading?” Eight of the DBS participants responded (73%). Two

responses did not really answer the question, three wrote specifically about understanding the Bible as opposed to God speaking through Scripture, and one who was reminded of a past mission experience. Of the final two, one wrote that a specific verse spoke to her the truth “It’s not about me,” and the other wrote that the Psalms made her want to look for their reality in the present.

Ten of the W&P participants responded (77%), with all writing about a message they received from Scripture. These W&P responses were much more direct about hearing God speak to them through the Scripture. These responses included “He knows my name,” “God is not surprised when we fail,” and “anger does not help.” Two wrote that Scripture spoke to them about their spiritual gifts. One wrote that phrases, especially from Psalms, “speaks to my situation.” W&P participants generally responded more clearly about God speaking through Scripture rather than just learning about Scripture.

A third question asked, “How has your practice of praying changed through this study?” Nine of the eleven DBS participants (82%) and ten of the twelve W&P respondents (83%) indicated at least some change in their practice of praying. Four DBS responses leaned towards the mechanics of praying: “now [I] continuously praise and [say] ‘thank you’ during the day,” “try to say something to God at the start of the day,” “praying Scripture,” “[praying] for needs mentioned in the group,” and four others indicating they pray more often and/or longer. Two DBS participants indicated a relational qualitative change in their practice of prayer. PD2 wrote that she adapts Scripture “more to my and others’ situations” and PD4 wrote his prayers were “a little deeper.”

As with DBS participants, four W&P respondents indicated they pray more often and/or longer. Praying more often may also have a relational qualitative effect, but participants did not indicate this in their responses to this question on their practice of praying. Four of the W&P respondents indicated a relational change in their prayers with these phrases: “more open,” “more truthful,” “[more] transparent,” and “ask only if it is God’s will.” A fifth W&P respondent was “convicted to spend more time listening for God’s guidance,” and a sixth stated it is now “important to me to stop and pray when I hear something or feel something: pray right now!” Therefore, six of the twelve W&P respondents (50%) indicated a relational qualitative, not just quantitative, change in their prayer life, while only two of the DBS participants (18%) indicated similar changes in their prayer life.

A fourth item was asked in two similar ways. Participants were asked to “describe an encounter you had with God through this study” and also to “describe a recent personal experience with the presence of God.” The responses to both of these questions will be evaluated together. Nine of the DBS participants responded (82%) to at least one of these two questions and all wrote about meaningful encounters. Two were miraculous: one clearly heard God tell her to give money to a stranger and one believed God saved her from a near car accident. Three felt God speak to them: PD3 through a difficult situation, PD4 felt God “personally requesting my presence,” and PD5 that she is important to God. Two mentioned specific times of an experience with God: one during Sunday morning worship and the other simply wrote, “at 4:00 today.” Two involved encounters with others: one person had a discussion with her adult son about Bible study and one was able to encourage two coworkers in their Christian faith. This confirms the

premise of DBS that by simply the act of reading Scripture, one will have a fresh encounter with God.

Nine of the W&P participants (69%) responded to this question, a slightly lower percentage than the DBS respondents. Two were miraculous: the Holy Spirit directing her to a pew where her guest's husband always sat and the other praying for his sister at the altar when she received healing. Although not a recent event, one recalled feeling the presence of God when her nephew passed away. One wrote about an experience of God through the listening prayer exercises. Two involved specific moments: during a church meal and during a Sunday evening music concert at the church. Significantly, five of the answers involved ministry (the two persons who wrote about the miraculous encounters also wrote answers about ministry as well): relying on the Holy Spirit to help teach an unplanned Sunday School lesson, being more observant of surroundings and needs of others, being called to pray for someone else, during weekly prayer meetings, and having God put people in his path to share the Good News with. This is the only question where DBS response was higher than W&P response. It is possible that the other questions also touched on this topic and so answers would have been redundant. It is also likely that this is an area that could be more readily addressed in the W&P curriculum. It is interesting that the majority of the W&P responses involved some form of ministry with others.

A fifth area asked participants to "Describe any experiences or results while praying for others through this study." Six of DBS participants (55%) responded positively. Half of the responses were general: "answered prayer," "more meaningful," and "I draw nearer to others' needs." The other half were more specific. One felt more patient and proactive with her students after praying and one prayed for her grandchildren

“knowing He will not let them go.” The most significant was the survival of a participant’s great-grandson who was not breathing at birth during the course of the study.

Eight of the W&P participants (62%) responded positively with only one being general: “no matter how much you pray, it is not enough.” The other seven were specific regarding answered prayers. One felt closer to his wife. One mentioned four answered prayers of healing during the course of the study (two physical, one financial, and one relationship) and another mentioned seeing a remarkable health improvement in his child. One felt better equipped handling a sick relative after praying and another saw a change in a person she prayed for. One wrote that she could feel the Holy Spirit at work while praying for her sister. The last, though written without details, revealed a transformation in his prayer life: “An opportunity sought me out [that I] just had to accept and move with it [and I saw the] importance of moving forward with it.” Again, the responses show the W&P participants revealing more detailed and personal work of the Holy Spirit.

A sixth area prompted participants to “Describe any experiences with words, promptings, or feeling from God regarding another person during this study. If you followed up, what was your experience?” Seven of the eleven DBS participants (64%) responded to this question. Three of these were directly related to the doubts about God raised from one of the DBS participants; two of these three were led to consider more deeply their own faith and the third was prompted to respond “as a loving parent.” One other felt led to encourage the growth in faith of another DBS participant. The effect of group study seemed apparent as four felt prompted by God regarding one of their classmates. Of the other three respondents, one became more sensitive to the needs of a

particular (unnamed) person, one had a passage from 1 Corinthians “jump out” so much so that he used it for a Sunday School lesson, and the last one was prompted to tell a young lady she just met that she simply needed Jesus. All of these could be considered the work of God, however, only the last (9% of the eleven DBS participants) seems to approach what might be considered a supernatural sign and wonder.

Ten of the thirteen W&P participants (77%) responded to this question about hearing from God regarding another person. One learned about forgiveness, one involved empathy for particular (named) persons, one felt great love while praying for his wife, and four wrote about experiences from God regarding another W&P classmate. Of these four, two were for encouraging other participants and one was to pray for another participant. The fourth of these, though, was the experience she had when prophetic words in prayer were spoken over her in lesson 27 (week 6). Like this last one, the other three of the ten responses leaned towards supernatural signs and wonders. The first of these three was prompted to invite a friend to church and then was led by the Holy Spirit to sit in a particular pew, the same pew her friend’s husband used to sit in before he passed away years before. This friend is now a member of the church! The second had a “feeling or prompting ... from God” to call a friend; her call was very timely giving her friend “calm” and support. The third felt led to follow up with a coworker who seemed to have lost his faith; that coworker is now attending a church in his local community. Thus, four of the thirteen W&P participants (31%) wrote of a supernatural hearing from God that was responded to with powerful results.

Overall the survey results from the participants supported the hypothesis that W&P would increase participants’ understanding, practice, and ministry in the

supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. W&P participants generally indicated that they grew in understanding the work of the Holy Spirit, but more than that they also practiced hearing from the Holy Spirit through prayer and listening, and more likely were to apply these practices in ministry to others. For all the questions addressed in the surveys, with one exception, the W&P participants responded more often and more specifically about experiences they had with God. They also responded much more often that they applied these practices in ministry to others resulting in powerful responses from others.

Weekly Data From Study Manuals, Journals, and In-Class Discussions

In this section, the weekly lessons are evaluated using the information from the study manuals, journals, and in-class discussions. The study manuals included participants' notes and answers to questions. The journals were the participants' opportunity to write down anything they wanted to at the conclusion of each class. As opposed to written responses, the in-class discussions were verbal, with observations taken by the facilitator and the context associate that participated in the class. All of this data is helpful in comparing DBS and W&P as well as determining the effectiveness of W&P. As a reminder, table 5 outlines the lessons for each week.

Week 1 (lesson 2) focused on creation using Genesis 1-2, Job 38-41, Psalm 19 and 104, and John 1:1-15.¹³ Many of the DBS participants enjoyed reading creation texts not only from Genesis, but also from Psalms and Job. PD2 wrote, "the Job chapters are amazing ... and had a huge impact on me." DBS participants discussed the wonder of God and eight of the eleven wrote in some manner about the glory of God and/or praising

¹³ W&P also included a reading from Col. 1:13-20.

God because of creation. PD4 mentioned that he gets revelation from God through Scripture and wrote regarding God, “You keep me safe.” PD5 told how she was listening to Genesis through ear-pods while getting her nails done when she felt compelled to share the Gospel with her Buddhist manicurist. The DBS exercise was to memorize a Psalm. Only general comments about liking or not liking memorization resulted. DBS, unlike W&P, included hymns that could be looked up in the readings. A few wrote or commented that they particularly liked this approach and received much from the hymns.

The W&P participants also enjoyed the breadth of the Scripture passages. There were discussions about creation and, like DBS, some emphasis on the Job passages, including the idea that God still speaks out of the whirlwinds in our lives. Some discussion, prompted by one participant, became a technical discussion about entropy and the big bang theory, however, the facilitator redirected this discussion back to the lesson. PW7 summed up her response to the biblical reading and discussion this way: “God's creative power shows me ways to serve Him, shows ways to help others; I wish I was more plugged into this power.”

At least eight of the W&P participants completed the “Walk with God” home exercise through which many had an encounter with God. PW2, while at the coast watching dolphins, felt a “hallelujah” each time one breached the water. PW4 had a very emotional experience in which God said to her, “I am here.” PW5 wondered why she tends to worry when the birds she saw have enough to eat. PW6 felt alive in God listening to the morning traffic. PW8 wrote that she “felt like God was talking to her out loud.” PW13 did her “walk” while watering plants; she felt God say to her, “water the roots” about the importance of feeding her soul. Half of the entire W&P class and 75% of

those who completed the “Walk with God” exercise indicated a significant encounter with the Creator through creation.

The W&P in-class exercise repeated a homework assignment of a breath prayer. The exercise involved breathing in a name for God and then breathing out a request, repeating this for a few minutes. Seven of the participants wrote about this exercise and the discussion in class was positive. PW5, a very spiritual person, felt the exercise was too hurried for a good experience. Not surprisingly, others commented that it seemed the exercise took a long time. PW12 wrote: “As you breathe in and out, you feel the wonder of God. This prayer is powerful ... over time and circumstance.” The phrases used by participants included, “Breathe on me, Breath of God,” “Provider, thank you,” “Holy Spirit, keep [my] family healthy,” “Dear God, lift me up,” and “Bread of life, deliver me from food bondage.” Each of these seemed directed towards the particular circumstances of the participant. I use this prayer often in my personal prayer life and, as the facilitator, encouraged the W&P class to incorporate this into their prayer lives as well.

The week 2 (lesson 5) focused on Exodus 1-15. The DBS lesson is titled “Deliverance” as the Israelites were delivered from Egypt. This reading proved to be a negative experience for one DBS participant as she had never read about the harshness of the plagues: “horror after horror,” she wrote. She wondered where the “God of love” was that she was used to hearing about. To her great credit, she continued in the class and the DBS participants continued to encourage her throughout.

In personalizing the discussion about deliverance, PD10 said he had been delivered from hate and PD4 was delivered from cigarettes through a pocket Bible he kept in his cigarette pocket. The DBS exercise was to examine Exodus 3:1-4:17 for the

central idea, meaning for the church, and meaning for the individual. The discussion focused on responding to God and that God does not give up on us even though, like Moses, we resist. Although she did not want to share this in the group, PD1 wrote about her personal experience with this. She encountered a distraught woman in a parking lot when “I heard God say out loud to me, ‘Give her your \$100 bill’.” She continued writing, “I definitely heard God telling me exactly what to do.” PD7 drew in her journal a pillar of fire and a cloud and wrote on it, “I will work on trusting you more!”

In the W&P group there was some discussion about the plagues and the display of God’s power in delivering the Israelite people. PW11 wrote how he was miraculously delivered from addiction. PW7 wrote about being delivered from impatience in dealing with a relative. PW4 liked the Bible teaching about God using things at hand to perform miracles. In class she talked about how things fell into place, by the hand of God, after her husband suddenly died. PW13 shared how God provided financially for her in specific needed amounts. The main focus of the discussion was participants sharing stories of how God spoke to them in various ways in the past. PW11 heard God’s non-audible voice say about a man, “Ask him if he has a job,” which led to the man being hired and turning away from selling crack cocaine. PW5 heard in a dream a Scripture, “Speak the truth in love,” which led to healing with her daughter. PW3 told how God spoke to him about turning his life around through a Gideon Bible. PW8 mentioned that God provided help through her prayer in a bad job situation.

After the discussion in W&P week 2, participants were led in a soaking prayer exercise. PW5 heard, “Love me, Love others, peace be with you.” PW13 heard God speak to her when she asked to be delivered from gluttony, “You are delivered. You need

to act in that deliverance.” PW12 thanked God for providing for his family and asked for strength to hear God now. After this exercise, PW12 drew a diagram in his journal of how close each member of his family was to God; he rated himself at 50% and his wife at 75%. PW3 got the impression of wasted talent and “lost opportunities.” He now wonders if he should be involved in teaching ministry. PW7, mentioned about being delivered from impatience and that she heard God say, “Calm down; let me help.” PW1 felt a presence of thankfulness and was reminded that the winds and the waves answer to God. When asked how to spend quiet time in prayer listening, one participant mentioned that praying in tongues helps. Six of the W&P participants (50% of those present that day), therefore, described a significant encounter with God through this listening exercise.

Week 3 (lesson 13) was on Psalms and was the last lesson in the Old Testament. One DBS participant shared a simple ten-finger prayer from Psalm 31:14-15, “O Lord, my God, my times are in your hands” (there are ten words in this prayer) where other words could be substituted for “times.” She told of an experience where she gave this prayer to a drunkard at a hospital and found out many weeks later that this prayer helped him become sober. In her study manual she also wrote, “there is a Psalm for every situation.”

PD2 wrote: “Reading and studying all of these Psalms has been a huge, wonderful Joy [sic] for me. I so appreciate this lesson guiding me into the Psalms, not teaching about the Psalms.” Even after only three lessons, PD5 wrote, “It feels like I am starting to learn how the whole Bible means more when you connect its parts.” PD8 wrote that he reads and meditates on Scripture, like the Psalms, “only to hear what God wants to say to me in that instant.” Once again hymns were favorably mentioned. PD1 wrote: “Looking

up all the hymns listed that were inspired by Psalms was my favorite!!!” The exercise for DBS was asking what Psalm 22 says about God, about us, and about our relationship to God. The imagery of Jesus on the cross prophesied in this Psalm was readily mentioned in the discussion and seemed to be new information for most in the DBS group. This DBS lesson proved to be a successful example of how the Word of God can transform.

In the week 3 (lesson 13) W&P class, the focus was on the Psalms speaking “for” us encouraging full transparency with God. PW3 commented, “Authenticity is important [and the Psalms] give us permission to have doubts and be angry.” Participants discussed how praying Scripture is praying in the accordance with God’s will and that “God will honor His Word.” Another noted about how the Psalms are the language of prayer that always lead us back to praise. A discussion of Psalm 22 led to mentioning the sacrifice of Christ. PW1 shared a vision she had of Jesus standing between us and God. This led PW9 to describe the heartache of watching her nephew die. However, before he died, he had a vision of Jesus standing outside his room. This gave the family comfort, which was why “Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death” from Psalm 23 is so meaningful to her.

The exercise was to take a Psalm or portion of a Psalm and write a personal prayer based upon it. Four people shared their personal prayers based upon the particular Psalm that spoke to them. Most of the W&P participants also had their prayers written out in their study manual. It was interesting that of the eleven participants present, there were nine different Psalms selected for the exercise. The prayers written were often beautiful and very heartfelt. The exercise proved to be a good practice in making the Word of God personal.

Week 4 (lesson 20) turned to the New Testament and the Gospel of Mark. The focus of the DBS study manual and the video was “Hidden Messiah,” which led participants to discuss why Jesus often told people in Mark not to tell others about Him. This led in turn to a discussion as to why they are reticent to tell others about Jesus. They came up with various ways to tell the good news: “Jesus loves you,” “I know someone who can help you,” “Jesus knows you,” and others. PD3 shared her story again of sharing the finger prayer with the drunkard at the hospital. PD8 told how he talks about Jesus to those around him in the Diamond Club on cruises. PD9 claimed to be willing to talk to anybody about Jesus.

The DBS exercise was to enter into the story of Mark 9:2-13 in order to feel and imagine the drama. Coincidentally, this is the story described in chapter 1 of this thesis in which the father of a demonized boy asks for Jesus’ healing with the phrase, “I believe, help my unbelief.” This exercise led to a discussion of the work of God in the present. DBS participants discussed when they see God in action. PD1 said, “You can feel the power during communion.” PD7 said in the peace after a storm. Then three participants shared a miraculous story that had occurred in their lives. PD4 credited the prayers of his mother when he survived a horrific car accident on his wedding day. PD3 spoke of how when she writes letters to people there is an “enabling grace” wherein she simply holds the pencil while the Holy Spirit writes the words. PD5 was given a prophetic word from a pastor about her child and his family becoming missionaries. The pastor was led to say, “I know this is difficult for you [but your children will have a] life filled with the Holy Spirit.” In a wonderful way, discussing the miracle story of Mark 9:2-13 led some to share their miracle stories.

In week 4 (lesson 20) of the W&P class, the focus was on the power of Jesus displayed in the gospel of Mark. Participants discussed God's power over such things as nature, fear, unclean spirits, death, tradition, and healing. A couple of participants mentioned that because Jesus has power, he enables us to have power. PW3 bridged off of this to say that we need to be new wineskins, new every day, to hold the power of the Kingdom of God. There was also discussion on why it can be difficult to share our faith.

The exercise in W&P asked participants to write down a testimony that they could share with someone else. The DBS exercise that focused on the miracle story of healing the demoniac boy (Mark 9:2-13) spontaneously had three people share a miraculous story from their lives. On the other hand, the W&P exercise caused all to consider God's miraculous work in their lives. In discussing the exercise, seven people shared stories, some of which have already been mentioned elsewhere in the project. Three are not mentioned elsewhere: PW1 felt the Holy Spirit tell her to not let her young daughter go over to a friend's house one day. That was the day the house was intentionally set on fire by an arsonist. PW7 felt the presence of God when visiting FUMC-Irving for the first time when the pastor sang, "You are standing on holy ground." PW13 wrote a devotion for her dad that brought him to Christ when she was gone on a mission trip. The W&P lesson resulted in more than twice the participants sharing a past personal miracle story as opposed to the DBS lesson (seven versus three).

In week 5 (lesson 24) the reading was from Acts 1-15. The DBS discussion spontaneously led to the work of the Holy Spirit. Participants talked about the miracles experienced in the early church which led to a good discussion of similar work today. PD4 shared that as a counselor at children's camp the previous summer the Holy Spirit

filled the campers' dorm room one night while he felt words coming out of his mouth sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with them. PD3 talked about the Holy Spirit saying "No" as she felt led to not speak to a man at the park that morning. PD9 told of a vision she had one night of her deceased sister saying, "I'm with my children and I'm ok; I need you to be okay, too. Now get up."

The DBS class also discussed being open to the Holy Spirit. One asks the Holy Spirit to give him the message he needs to hear from his Bible reading that day. Others said they are asking for prayers of healing to be answered, for the Holy Spirit to be invited into the worship services, and for an Acts type revival to happen at FUMC-Irving. PD7 wrote about praying "with fervor for the Holy Spirit to revitalize this church." This is the type of amazing discussion that can transform a church!

Unfortunately, the DBS exercise after the break was focused on Acts 4:32-5:11, the story of the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira. Although not wanting to be critical of DBS, it is puzzling that of all the amazing events in these chapters of Acts, that one third of the class time is focused on this passage. The exercise directed participants to consider what the passage said about God, about us, and about the relationship between God and us. There was good discussion in the DBS group, but it was clear that the spirited discussion of the power of the Holy Spirit had left.

Week 5 (lesson 24) of W&P focused on the power of the Holy Spirit throughout. PW7 mentioned that the Holy Spirit was not mentioned in the church when she was growing up. Others agreed that there was more of an emphasis on stable tradition rather than the risky Holy Spirit. Participants talked about how being led by the Holy Spirit is important; they used examples such as which street to go down, being prompted to call

someone, or listening to the still small voice. Being available and yielding personal agendas to the Holy Spirit was also discussed. Almost all of the participants wrote about the need for the Holy Spirit in their lives as a result of this lesson. PW2 told the story of the Holy Spirit bringing he and his wife together. PW1 mentioned that people in the congregation would see the W&P class as having encountered the Holy Spirit and that others would want to be a part as well. A desire to have the Holy Spirit work more powerfully in the church to bring growth and revival was a common theme mentioned by participants.

Unlike DBS, the week 5 (lesson 24) W&P exercise kept the theme of the Holy Spirit through a time of anointing. While soaking prayer music was playing, participants came forward to be anointed with oil and to “receive the Holy Spirit.” There was a palpable feeling of the presence of the Holy Spirit during this time. During the anointing exercise in W&P, some participants felt a little weak in the knees although none fell to the floor under the power of the Holy Spirit. On the following Sunday, PW11 mentioned feeling the presence of the Holy Spirit for days after this experience. During the class discussion, this man had mentioned about feeling prompted by the Holy Spirit to pray for someone at the altar at the end of the Sunday morning service. Ten days later, while at church, he encouraged his sister to go to the altar for prayer and that he would go with her. She had been suffering from a number of issues, including a painful foot. She was anointed at the altar and testified on social media that she did not need pain medication that afternoon, that her foot was miraculously healed, and that she was reconnected with the power of her Savior. This anointing exercise is powerful and is repeated at least once more during an Old Testament lesson in the full thirty-four week W&P curriculum.

In week 6 (lesson 27) participants read all of First Corinthians and the first three chapters of Second Corinthians. The DBS video discussed at length the “four letters to the church at Corinth,” although this is a disputed and seemingly unnecessary analysis of the text. The class discussion centered around what was meant by unity, with the consensus being around the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. PD10 emphasized that the church is not to follow the culture while PD5 mentioned how difficult it is to be the church in the surrounding culture.

The DBS exercise had participants rewrite 1 Cor. 3:1-23 in their own words in order to understand the passage better. This continued the discussion of what unity meant in the church. PD4 wrote that the “purpose of the church is to be unified around Christ to spread the love of Christ.” Following the exercise, DBS participants were asked to share what they thought their spiritual gifts were based upon the reading. The gifts mentioned including faith (self-defined¹⁴ as “everything will work out”), service, discernment (self-defined as the “difference between right and wrong”), evangelism (self-defined as “carrying a Bible into nursing homes”), and encouragement. PD2, who mentioned service, felt God telling her to “go and do” during a previous Bible study experience. PD5, who mentioned encouragement, believed that God was developing her prayer life. Note that the spiritual gifts DBS participants identified as possessing were often self-defined in terms that tended away from signs and wonders that could be associated with that gift.

In the week 6 (lesson 27) W&P class, the focus was on spiritual gifts and how they can be used to build the church. PW13 wrote of First Corinthians: “Every line is so

¹⁴ Self-defined means that the participant wrote a clarifying statement about what they meant by the particular spiritual gift.

full of the Spirit.” In the discussion on the work of the Holy Spirit to build the church, three participants told of experiences from that week of sharing Christ with someone. While out of town due to a family death, PW4 shared with two separate women that God is working even in difficult situations. PW13 was bumped into by a seemingly upset woman at a grocery store and ended up sharing with her that “with God, things could be better.” PW11 encouraged a man who had suffered much to return to church.

The W&P discussion then turned to spiritual gifts, especially prophecy. PW1 exclaimed out loud, “Wow!”, when she realized that everybody could be a prophet. She wrote: “Who knew? Pray for and aspire to prophecy? If prophecy is speaking a word of (for) God, then are we prophets?” In a conversation weeks later, this participant still marveled at the idea that, indeed, she can be prophetic. The spiritual gifts that W&P participants mentioned for themselves were discernment, words of knowledge, leadership, wisdom, mercy, faith, and evangelism. PW4 said she desired the gift of healing and wanted to experience the power of God. Unlike the DBS participants, the W&P participants did not self-identify the gifts into more natural terms like “everything will work out” or “knowing right from wrong.” There was a clear sense that the class as a whole was moving towards the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit through spiritual gifts.

The W&P exercise for week 6 (lesson 27) was prophetically praying over one another in pairs. This follows the key Scripture for the week: “Pursue love and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy” (1 Cor. 14:1). With soft instrumental music playing, each person prayed briefly for a partner and then listened with a sheet of paper in hand to what God would say about that person. The participants

found this a challenging exercise. As the facilitator, I participated in this and was given this message from my partner, “Continue to lead us forward. Discern what is best for our church. Keep your vitality and enthusiasm.” This was the first time he had ever had an experience like this! In return I was able to share a word of healing for my partner’s shoulder and that God will continue to use him in our church. One participant prophesied encouragement over her partner with all the people he helps through the church. PW4 wrote that she was touched when the prophetic words spoken over her were “Grandmother’s powerful prayers.” In the discussion that followed this exercise, the general consensus of the class was how encouraged they were to be prayed over.

In evaluating all of the weekly written responses, one item stood out that is worth describing in detail. Did participants recognize the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in their lives? Only one of the eleven DBS participants (9%), PD1, wrote¹⁵ about a miraculous experience in their study manuals or journals. In this case, she heard the voice of God telling her to give a distraught woman the one hundred dollar bill in her wallet and not just the twenty dollars she had already given. None of the other DBS participants wrote about a specific miraculous event in their lives. This does not mean that miraculous events had not occurred in their lives. In fact, three people verbally shared miracle stories during the week 4 in-class discussions. Thus, there were four miracle stories shared by DBS participants, but only one wrote about it.

In contrast, every one of the thirteen W&P participants (100%) wrote down at least one specific story of the miraculous work of God in their lives. Some, but not all, were in response to the lesson 20 (week 4) question, “Describe a time, if you can, when

¹⁵ Although other DBS participants verbally talked about miracles that had occurred in their lives, only one DBS participant wrote about one.

you or someone you know was healed by the power of prayer.” A brief description of each is appropriate to see the wide variety of miracles that had occurred in their lives.

PW1 wrote about her daughter being saved from a house fire and about hearing God speak to her directly while undergoing chemotherapy treatments. PW2 described how a friend’s son was miraculously (his word!) healed from brain swelling due to a car accident and how he personally was saved from three separate plane crashes. PW3 described that while walking he clearly heard God call his name so loudly that he stopped to turn around just as a car rushed by going the wrong way down the street. He also described how a flight attendant approached his wife telling her that God told her to specifically ask his wife to pray for her.

PW4, while going to visit her dying husband in the hospital, heard God say through her anxiety, “I am here. Look at ME!” Years before, her young daughter was miraculously healed after she prayed at the hospital chapel a prayer “relinquishing” her to God. PW5 heard God speak to her in a dream, “Speak the truth in love,” which led to relationship healing with her daughter. In addition, she wrote that two men in her life were healed of their depression through her (and others’) prayers. PW6 received immediate calmness while praying in the ICU after a heart procedure. PW7 described that a man was near death when people in her shop stopped and prayed “and continuously prayed” until he “miraculously survived.” PW8 received joy that she did not think she could have until God intervened. She also felt like God was talking to her “out loud” during her prayer walk from lesson 2 (week 1).

PW9 had a co-worker suffer a heart attack and die three times in the ambulance, but when he arrived in the emergency room he was fine. PW10, while being treated for

cancer, often heard in prayer God telling her, “It will be ok.” After her third surgery for the cancer she felt the presence of God and knew everything would be better. Soon after, after a nephew died, she felt God say to her, “he is ok and she would be ok.” PW11 heard God tell him to offer a man a job even though he did not even know the man needed a job. PW12 “felt God’s presence and healing power” when suffering from a lung ailment. PW13, while struggling with a food addiction, prayed “Bread of life, deliver me from food bondage,” and she immediately felt full.

Thirteen out of thirteen W&P participants all wrote about various miraculous stories from their lives. Some of these were stories from years past and some were more recent. The supernatural work of the Holy Spirit is indeed active and present. The W&P curriculum gave participants guidance and opportunity to write down miraculous stories and they did! Given the same guidance and opportunity, is it probable that at least most of the other ten DBS participants would also have a miraculous story to write down?

In addition to writing, encouraging the verbal sharing of the work of the Holy Spirit in participants’ lives was intentionally part of the discussion in the W&P curriculum. The context associate in the W&P group wrote about these discussions, “We have had some good sharing and witnessing among the group.” Two participants thought this was so important that they suggested that miracle stories should be shared in the Sunday morning worship or the monthly church newsletter! This type of action generated from within the membership can transform a church!

One potential effect of W&P in the life of participants is highlighted by one of the W&P participants. PW2, a lifelong Christian in his eighties and married more than fifty years, had never taken a Bible study before. He started writing out prayers in his lesson

book on week three and then took the final exercise of praying over someone else to heart. The final prayer he wrote in his lesson book was a prayer for his wife. For the first time in their marriage, he prayed out loud over his wife, praying for her health and thanking God for giving her to him. “I love this woman and I pray you look upon her and take care of her,” he wrote and prayed over her. In response, he wrote that he received “feelings of great love and affection.” Imagine a church filled with husbands praying over their wives and wives over their husbands. That is the Holy Spirit at work.

Data from Post-Course Interviews

Along with the surveys and the data collected from class homework and discussion, post-course interviews were conducted with each participant. Notes were taken and the interviews recorded to confirm accuracy. All of the respondents were very willing to be recorded in interviews, again showing a high level of commitment to the project. Appendix G lists the questions asked. In this section, particular attention is paid to areas that would either confirm or contradict previous data regarding the hypothesis of this DMin project.

It was interesting that many in the two Bible studies signed up either to support me as the pastor or to find out more about me since I had only been serving FUMC-Irving for a few months when the project started. The commitment level to the project was extremely high as evidenced by high attendance each week and only one DBS participant having to drop out of the class. To complete a thirty-four week class, like DBS or W&P, requires a high level of commitment. Therefore, it is possible that the high

level of commitment shown in this project may not be too askew of the commitment level of a typical W&P class of the future.

As expected, both DBS and W&P were helpful to participants in understanding the Bible. Nine of eleven (82%) DBS participants and twelve of thirteen (92%) W&P participants mentioned in the interviews that the Bible studies improved their understanding in at least some way. Three of the W&P participants specifically mentioned the Holy Spirit with two being surprised at how the Holy Spirit is throughout the Scripture and the third mentioned going to “a different level” regarding the Holy Spirit. None of the DBS participants specifically mentioned the Holy Spirit in response to this interview question.

Almost all the participants spoke about how God speaks to them through the Bible. Only two from each of the groups said that this does not happen. Many of the participants in both classes mentioned that this occurs frequently or even every time they read Scripture. When asked about a specific experience, however, the answers became more vague. Of those in the DBS group who said that God does speak to them through the Bible, only three referred to a specific Scripture in their answer and the others either spoke of hearing from God in ways other than Scripture (e.g., “nature”) or were very general. Six of the W&P participants, twice as many as the DBS group, were more specific in their answers, either citing a particular passage that God spoke to them through or quoting something they heard from God while reading (e.g., “Relax and read it; you will understand.”).

Regarding prayer, both hearing God and speaking to God, eight of the eleven (73%) DBS participants and ten of the thirteen (77%) W&P participants mentioned some

change in either their understanding or practice of prayer. No one in the DBS group said that they changed in the listening side of their prayer life. All of the DBS responses had to do with the speaking side of prayer (e.g., “pray longer”) or the thinking side of prayer (e.g., “trying not to be so analytical”). One DBS participant did wonder if the thoughts he was having were from the Holy Spirit. In contrast, all ten of the W&P participants who felt there was some change mentioned some aspect about listening to God. The answers include being open to hearing an audible voice, learning to listen more, connecting with God to hear and not just to speak, and hearing God talk to them at night.

When being specific about an experience while praying for someone, seven (64%) of the DBS participants and all (100%) of the W&P participants spoke of some experience beyond just saying that they prayed for someone. The DBS participants experiences were described as: “felt God’s presence,” “prayed immediately for a co-worker and felt a holy place,” “total relaxation,” and a feeling that the prayer concern was “part of God’s plan.” PD1 felt compelled to pray over a homeless person and PD5 prayed over a girl at a gas station and then felt prompted to give her some money. Five (45%) of the DBS participants prayed for someone specific after being prompted by God.

All of the W&P group mentioned a specific experience, many from the in-class exercise of praying for another person. Some of the experiences were quite remarkable including hearing specific words (e.g., “confidence; you are important” and “Grandma; you have influence”) and a specific (private) vision. A father (PW12) felt a new sense of focused prayer over his son and later learned that a cardiologist, who “just happened” to pass by the hospital room, identified the underlying condition and was able to help with recovery. When praying about a person with a cigarette habit, the participant said that the

person heard God speak about the habit. One interesting example is that during the prayer exercise of week 6, PW9 was praying for PW1 when she felt, much to her surprise, an overwhelming prompting to pray “compassion” and “patience” over the President of the United States! Twelve of the W&P participants (92%) prayed for someone specific after they were prompted by God.

When describing a personal experience with the presence of God during the course of the six weeks of the study, almost all the DBS participants spoke in general terms (“in daily study,” during Sunday worship,” and “in nature”). Four of the DBS participants (36%) did mention feeling God’s presence during a specific event, including one who was able to go to work one day without her chronic pain. Almost all of the W&P participants said they had a personal experience of God, but in comparison to the DBS group, nine of the W&P participants (69%) mentioned something specific. These included times during the study (“when anointed with oil,” “I felt God in the room” during the soaking prayer, “I felt a peace I haven’t felt in a long time during the study,” and “when [PD12] was speaking I felt God speaking through him”). One said he had “knowledge” from God during his wife’s surgery (scheduled during week four of the class) that everything would turn out all right.

In the interviews, two of the DBS participants mentioned something miraculous that occurred during the six weeks of the Bible study. These miracles included a great-grandson surviving a life-threatening birth and the near-miss car accident, both mentioned earlier. There were also two responses that involved participants moving beyond their comfort zone (talking to a Buddhist and “trying something again”), rather

than what might be considered miraculous. This, however, does not minimize the importance of these events to the participants.

In contrast, seven of the W&P participants experienced something miraculous during the time of the study. One was the survival of a (different) baby and another was a self-identified miraculous good health report. Two involved adult children of participants “just happening” to have a doctor give a life-saving diagnosis and one having a supernatural knowing that his wife’s surgery that took a turn for the worse would still end up well. PW1 had two miracles occur. One has already been mentioned where she “just happened” to sit in a church pew that a guest’s husband sat in when he attended the church. The other when she “just happened” to have a Bible with her when she heard God tell her to share “Two are better than one” (Ecclesiastes 4:9) with a woman struggling in a parking lot. The healing of a woman’s foot has already been mentioned. However, the participant, who was part of the group that prayed for the woman at the altar, gave more details in the interview: a large numb spot on the foot that doctors said would be permanent had shrunk almost completely away. Thus, seven miraculous events occurred to W&P participants during the course of the class as opposed to two such events in the DBS group. That nine miraculous events occurred during six weeks is absolutely a testimony to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit!

When asked if their understanding of the Holy Spirit had changed through their study, the results were very different between DBS and W&P participants. Only two of the eleven DBS participants (18%) said that their understanding had grown with one of these saying that the Holy Spirit used to be only a concept but was now a reality. It is interesting that these two participants had never been in a Bible study before. With the

W&P participants, nine of thirteen (69%) said their understanding grew to some extent. PW2, who had never been in a Bible study before, learned that the Holy Spirit works and moves in people's lives; PW8 said she has started feeling the Holy Spirit; PW11 learned more about spiritual gifts; and PW7 said she realized the importance of the Holy Spirit since the Holy Spirit was not taught a lot about in church. Two of the six lessons in this study included reading about Pentecost and the Holy Spirit (Acts) and spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians). It is telling that so few of the DBS participants really learned anything about the Holy Spirit showing the lack of emphasis of the Holy Spirit in this curriculum, a deficiency that W&P tries to overcome.

Summary of Learning

Both DBS and W&P were well received by the participants. DBS has a long history of being an effective Bible study and this project showed this to be true as well. The purpose of the project, though, was to compare the effectiveness of W&P in relationship to DBS with regards to the understanding, practice, and ministry in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. Because of this, participant responses to W&P were evaluated with respect to DBS responses without any intention of disparaging DBS as a very effective Bible study.

Regarding the "Word" portion of W&P, results showed that W&P was at least as effective as DBS, if not more so, in helping participants grow in applying the Bible to their lives. There was an increase of 17% and 25% in W&P participants self-reporting that God speaks to them through the Bible and that the Bible guides their daily lives, respectively (see table 6). In the open-ended post-survey questions, about the same

percentage of W&P respondents as DBS respondents had an experience of God speaking to them through the Bible. Only two of the DBS respondents, however, wrote something specific about how God spoke to them through the Bible. In contrast, all ten of those W&P participants who positively responded were specific about something they received from God through the Scripture. These results were echoed in the interviews as twice as many W&P participants were specific in their verbal responses as to how God spoke to them through Scripture. The weekly study manual responses, journals, and in-class discussions also showed that both DBS and W&P participants grew in their understanding and application of the Bible. Reading the Bible in a group setting, as learned from Spener and the other Pietists in chapter 4, is an effective way to grow in understanding and application of Scripture. There was active and engaged discussion of Scripture in both the DBS and W&P classes.

Results evaluating the “Power” portion of W&P in comparison to DBS were dramatic. The areas that addressed the work of the Holy Spirit in terms of hearing from God, receiving a “knowing,” receiving specific words, praying with others for healing, receiving an “insight,” and an unusual (miraculous) event showed increases in the W&P group of 13% to 51% (see table 7). Four areas showed comparative increases of 51% to 71% between the W&P and DBS classes. When asked about words, promptings or feeling from God regarding another person, 31% of the W&P participants wrote of a supernatural hearing from God that resulted in powerful (i.e., signs and wonders) results as opposed to maybe (depending on how broadly “signs and wonders” is defined) only one (9%) of the DBS participants.

The weekly writing and in-class discussions clearly showed the overall value of Bible studies such as DBS and W&P. Regarding the intent of this project, it seems apparent that W&P met the expectations of increasing the understanding, practice, and ministry in the supernatural work of Holy Spirit. The week 1 (lesson 2) W&P walk with God and breath prayer exercises generally drew participants into an encounter with God and God's power. Many heard God speak to them through these exercises. None of the DBS participants described an encounter with God through the Scripture memorization exercise.

Sharing experiences in hearing from God continued in the week 2 (lesson 5). One DBS participant wrote about a dramatic experience of hearing God's voice. In the W&P group, almost all shared in the discussion or their study manuals about various ways they heard from God in their lives. In addition, a number wrote about messages they felt God saying to them during the soaking prayer experience.

In week 3 (lesson 13), W&P participants were able to put into practice praying the Scriptures. In the DBS curriculum there are exercises where students are directed to rewrite a Scripture passage in order to understand it better. However, this is different than the W&P exercise of personalizing a Scripture passage to formulate a prayer to God. This allows the Holy Spirit inspired Word of God to be used as a Holy Spirit inspired prayer to God. The response of the W&P participants was that most wrote beautiful personal prayers based upon a Psalm of their choice.

In week 4 (lesson 20), DBS participants shared more of their miraculous encounters with God than during any other lesson. This naturally flowed from the exercise of in-depth reading of the miracle story in Mark 9:2-13. W&P participants,

however, were directed to write a testimony to share with others based upon God's work in their lives. In the process, more than twice as many W&P as DBS participants shared a miraculous encounter with God. DBS asked participants to talk about sharing Jesus with others while W&P had an exercise that had participants write down a testimony to use to share Jesus with others. In the full thirty-four week curriculum, there would be more opportunity for follow-up to encourage participants to share these testimonies with others outside the group. In fact, some in the W&P group even suggested that their testimonies be used during Sunday morning worship.

In week 5 (lesson 24), there was great discussion in both DBS and W&P about the power of the Holy Spirit present in lives today. Most participants in both groups talked about wanting more of the Holy Spirit in their lives and in the life of the church. This conversation was stifled in DBS when the class exercise focused on the Ananias and Sapphira story rather than continuing discussion about the works of the Holy Spirit. In W&P, participants were anointed to receive and/or encounter the Holy Spirit. There was a general feeling of the strong presence of the Holy Spirit in the room during this time. This anointing may have led to a miraculous healing of a W&P participants' sister during morning worship less than two weeks after the class session.

In week 6 (lesson 27) DBS and W&P classes discussed spiritual gifts. The DBS class discussed the work of the Holy Spirit with regards to spiritual gifts, but their gifts leaned almost exclusively away from supernatural gifts or were self-defined in less supernatural ways (e.g., discernment as knowing right from wrong). The W&P discussion on spiritual gifts tended towards the supernatural gifts. Participants even expressed their desire to have the gift of healing. A true "aha" moment came when a participant realized

that everybody could be a prophet. The prophetic prayer exercise allowed participants the opportunity to practice the Scripture in 1 Cor. 14:1, “Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.” Many, although not all, reported receiving specific words of encouragement that they shared with their partners.

One particular area was noticeably different in the weekly written responses of DBS and W&P participants. Only one of the DBS participants wrote about a miraculous event that had occurred in their lives while all thirteen of the W&P participants shared an event. The miracles W&P participants wrote about included dramatic healings (physical, emotional, and relationship), specific words from God providing assurance and hope, and miraculous rescues from injury or death. Sharing miraculous stories affirms the ongoing supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.

The post-course interviews also showed a dramatic difference between DBS and W&P participants in regard to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. While almost all of the DBS and W&P participants said in the interviews that they grew in their understanding of the Bible, only W&P participants specifically mentioned this in relation to the Holy Spirit in Scripture. In regard to their understanding of the Holy Spirit, 69% of the W&P participants said they had grown through the study as opposed to only 18% of the DBS participants.

Regarding the practice in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, all of the W&P participants who grew in prayer spoke of the listening (to God) aspect of their prayer life while the DBS participants only spoke about the speaking (to God) side of prayer. In the interviews, 69% of the W&P participants as opposed to 36% of the DBS participants

described a specific time of experiencing the powerful presence of God. The soaking prayer and anointing practices were named in some of these W&P responses.

In the ministry aspect of praying for someone else, all of the W&P participants, as opposed to 64% of the DBS participants, had a specific experience from God, including specific words during the prophetic prayer exercise. All but one of the W&P participants also responded to a prompting from God to pray for a specific person. Ministry also involves the miraculous. Seven of the W&P participants (as opposed to two of The DBS participants) described in the interviews some miraculous event that occurred during the six weeks of the study. Two worth repeating involved W&P participants during a Sunday morning worship service. One involved a participant randomly choosing a pew in a sanctuary that seats around five hundred and having that pew be the very one her invited guest's now deceased husband used to sit in when he attended the church years before. This guest is now a member of the church. The second involved a participant feeling called to bring someone forward for prayer and anointing at the altar. That person received miraculous healing of her foot and wrote in a social media posting of her healing and that she and her husband "were renewed and reunited with our Savior." This is ministry in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit at a United Methodist Church!

DBS proved to be a good Bible study, which was anticipated. That supernatural works of the Holy Spirit occurred during a gathering of faithful Christians studying the Bible should also not be surprising. In the prophet Isaiah we read:

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,

but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
 and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.
 Isaiah 55:10-11

The pneumatological approach to Scripture discussed in chapter 4 showed that not only is the Holy Spirit present in the writing of the inspired word of God but that the Holy Spirit is present in the reading of the inspired word of God as well. If the participants of DBS are open to the work of the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit will show up even if not emphasized in the curriculum.

The critical results from this study are that the supernatural works of the Holy Spirit were revealed dramatically more through the intentional “Word and Power” study than through the Word-focused DBS. By intentionally focusing on the power of God in Scripture, participants’ understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives grew. As they practiced through W&P exercises being more open to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, they experienced more of the work of the Holy Spirit. Through in-class and homework exercises, W&P participants reached out to others in ministry with the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. Often this type of ministry occurred outside any intentional W&P exercise and oftentimes spontaneously. Through only six weeks of study, W&P participants experienced many words of knowledge, prophetic words, impartation through anointing, healing, and miracles. This all happened in a typical United Methodist Church simply with church members open to the Holy Spirit.

Overall, the project proved the hypothesis that W&P would increase understanding, practice, and ministry in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. There is much work to be done to make W&P a publishable curriculum, but these results show that such efforts are worthwhile. One W&P participant was correct in openly questioning

how this class could be repeated without the author of W&P being the facilitator. At least these three things are needed for this to happen. First, the curriculum needs to be completed, including videos of the opening lectures. Second, a teacher's guide needs to be written for each of the lessons that describes the in-class exercises in enough detail to be repeated. Third, facilitators that are open to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in their own lives need to be trained.

Conclusion

A six week version of *Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study* (DBS) and a coinciding six-week version of the modified study, "Word and Power" (W&P) were compared. The data from surveys, weekly homework and discussion notes, and a final interview from participants in these two studies confirmed that "Word and Power" increased the understanding, practice, and ministry in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, especially in comparison to the DBS curriculum. Of course, this is a limited study in terms of only one class each of W&P and DBS being evaluated, only one set of around twelve students in each class being part of the study, and only six-weeks of the full thirty-four weeks of the studies being used. However, the results are exciting.

DBS is a widely accepted Bible study, especially in the United Methodist Church. There have been more than a million participants in several languages within thousands of churches around the world. Modifying DBS to include the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit is the intent of W&P. The hope is that W&P would be more readily accepted into churches who are already familiar with DBS. The data indicates the possibility that

the introduction of W&P into churches would increase the work of the Holy Spirit in the participants. Although not evaluated in this study, having members of a church with increased knowledge, practice, and ministry in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit should impact the life of the church as a whole. Anecdotally, this has happened to some extent in the life of the church in which this study was completed.

Much work needs to be done in order to have W&P ready to be published for churches to use. DBS is a fully copyrighted publication, so any modification to this would need to be approved and accepted. Videos need to be made of the opening lectures for all thirty-four weeks. The curriculum needs to be fully edited to remove those items that were repeated between DBS and W&P. The teaching manual needs to be written, especially so that in-class exercises could be repeated in a different setting. However, the work from this project is encouraging.

To see the power of the Holy Spirit come alive is an exciting event. At Pentecost, Peter quoted from Joel: “‘And in the last days it shall be,’ God declares, ‘that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, ... in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.’” (Acts 2:17-18). During class, one W&P participant literally cried out, “Wow!” She then remembered how the Holy Spirit worked through her when she felt led to go off-lesson in Sunday School and use a different Scripture to speak into a difficulty in a student’s life. She had awakened to the possibility that all Christians, even she, can be a prophet. Another W&P participant said the class woke something up inside of him, and he is reconnected with the Holy Spirit.

What would it be like in an American mainline United Methodist church if people grew in the understanding, practice, and ministry in the supernatural work of the Holy

Spirit? There are churches like that, certainly. There could be more! Is yours? What if you could say that if the Holy Spirit withdraws from your church, 95 percent of what you do would stop, and everybody would know the difference? “Word and Power” may be one tool by which this Holy Spirit transformation could take place in your church.

Throughout this DMin process there was a Contemporary Christian song performed by Big Daddy Weave that resonated with me. This song describes my desires and, I hope, the desire of my church to have God show up in power. My prayer is that these become the desires of many pastors (especially United Methodist!) and many churches (especially United Methodist!). If you wonder if this is possible, repeat the statement of the willing: “I believe! Help my unbelief!”

I wanna walk with You Jesus
 Feel your presence and know You're near
 I wanna see You Jesus
 Move in power and cast out fear

I need to hear You now,
 I need to know it's You
 I'm standing on your promises
 I know your Word is true
 You're bigger than what I see
 It's You and in exchange for me
 'Cause even the impossible can be reality
 Jesus I believe, Jesus I believe

I wanna say what You're saying
 Speaking life to what is dead
 And I wanna cling to You Jesus
 Hanging on your every breath

So let your kingdom come and let your will be done
 Here on the earth just like it is in heaven
 God let your kingdom come and let your will be done
 Right here on earth just like it is in heaven

I need to hear You now
 I need to know it's You

I'm standing on your promises
I know your Word is true
You're bigger than what I see
It's You in exchange for me
'Cause even the impossible is your reality

God even the impossible is your reality
Jesus I believe, Jesus I believe
Help my unbelief God, Jesus I believe¹⁶

¹⁶ Jason Ingram and Mike Weaver, "Jesus I Believe," (CCLI Song # 7007021, Copyright 2013, Open Hands Music, So Essential Tunes, Word Music, Weave Country), Accessed September 17, 2018, <https://songselect.ccli.com/Songs/7007021/jesus-i-believe/viewlyrics>.

APPENDIX A

SUPERNATURAL OCCURRENCES IN JOHN WESLEY'S JOURNAL
DURING THE SEVEN MONTHS AFTER ALDERSGATE (MAY 24, 1738)
AND DURING THE SEVEN MONTHS AFTER FETTER LANE (JANUARY 1, 1739)

Supernatural Occurrences Following Aldersgate (May 24 – December 31, 1738)

Wednesday, May 24, 1738. In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and save *me* from the law of sin and death.

I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, 'This cannot be faith; for where is thy joy?' then I was taught that *peace and victory over sin are essential to faith in the Captain of our salvation; but that as to the transports of joy that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply, God sometimes giveth, sometimes withholdeth from them, according to the counsels of his own will.*

After my return home I was much buffeted with temptations; but cried out, and they fled away. They returned again and again. I as often lifted up my eyes, and he 'sent me help from his holy place'. And herein I found the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving, yea fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now, I was always conqueror.¹

Saturday, June 3, 1738. I was so strongly assaulted by one of my old enemies that I had scarce strength to open my lips, or even to look up for help. But after I had prayed, faintly, as I could, the temptation vanished away.²

Wednesday, November 8, 1738. On Wednesday my brother [Charles] and I went, at their earnest desire, to do the last good office to the condemned malefactors. It was the most glorious instance I ever saw of faith triumphing over sin and death. One observing the tears run fast down the cheeks of one of them in particular, while his eyes were steadily fixed upwards, a few moments before he died, asked, 'How do you feel your heart now?' He calmly replied, 'I feel a peace which I could not have believed to be possible. And I know it is the peace of God which passeth all understanding.'³

Monday, November 20, 1738. On Monday night I was greatly troubled in dreams, and about eleven o'clock waked in an unaccountable consternation, without being able to sleep again. About that time (as I found in the morning) one who had been designed to be my pupil, but was not, came into the porter's lodge (where several persons were sitting) with a pistol in his hand. He presented this, as in sport, first at one and then at another. He then attempted twice or thrice to shoot himself, but it would not go off. Upon his laying it

¹ John Wesley, "May 24, 1738," *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976–), vol. 18, 249-50.

² Wesley, "June 3, 1738," *Works*, vol. 18, 253.

³ Wesley, "November 8, 1738," *Works*, vol. 19, 20-21.

down, one took it up and blew out the priming. He was very angry, went and got fresh prime, came in again, sat down, beat the flint with his key; and about twelve, pulling off his hat and wig, said he would die like a gentleman, and shot himself through the head.⁴

Tuesday, December 5, 1738. At St. Thomas's was a young woman, raving mad, screaming and tormenting herself continually. I had a strong desire to speak to her. The moment I began she was still. The tears ran down her cheeks all the time I was telling her, 'Jesus of Nazareth is able and willing to deliver you.' O where is faith upon earth? Why are these poor wretches left under the open bondage of Satan? Jesus, Master! Give thou medicine to heal their sickness and deliver those who are now also vexed with unclean spirits!⁵

Sunday, December 10, 1738. At one I expounded at Mr. Fox's, as usual. The great power of God was with us, and one who had been in despair several years received a witness that she was a child of God.⁶

Supernatural Occurrences Following Love-Feast (January 1 – July 31, 1739)

Monday, January 1, 1739. Mr. Hall, Kinchin, Ingham, Whitefield, Hutchings, and my brother Charles were present at our love-feast in Fetter Lane, with about sixty of our brethren. About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his majesty, we broke out with one voice, 'We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.'⁷

Sunday, January 21, 1739. We were greatly surprised in the evening while I was expounding in the Minories. A well-dressed, middle-aged woman suddenly cried out as in the agonies of death. She continued so to do for some time, with all the signs of the sharpest anguish of spirit. When she was a little recovered I desired her to call upon me the next day. She then told me that about three years before, she was under strong convictions of sin and in such terror of mind that she had no comfort in anything, nor any rest, day or night; that she sent for the minister of her parish and told him the distress she was in; upon which he told her husband she was stark mad and advised him to send for a physician immediately. A physician was sent for accordingly, who ordered her to be blooded, blistered, and so on. But this did not heal her wounded spirit. So that she continued much as she was before, till the last night he whose word she at first found to

⁴ Wesley, "November 20, 1738," *Works*, vol. 19, 21. This is John Wesley receiving a dream revelation, but he did not act on this dream and so did not intervene to prevent this suicide.

⁵ Wesley, "December 5, 1738," *Works*, vol. 19, 23.

⁶ Wesley, "December 10, 1738," *Works*, vol. 19, 27.

⁷ Wesley, "January 1, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 29.

be 'sharper than any two-edged sword' gave her a faint hope that he would undertake her cause and heal the soul which had sinned against him.⁸

Sunday, January 28, 1739. I went (having been long importuned thereto) about five in the evening, with four or five of my friends, to a house where was one of those commonly called French prophets. After a time she came in. She seemed about four or five and twenty, of an agreeable speech and behaviour. She asked why we came. I said, 'To try the spirits, whether they be of God.' Presently after she leaned back in her chair, and seemed to have strong workings in her breast, with deep sighings intermixed. Her head and hands, and, by turns, every part of her body, seemed also to be in a kind of convulsive motion. This continued about ten minutes, till, at six, she began to speak (though the workings, sighings, and contortions of her body were so intermixed with her words, that she seldom spoke half a sentence together) with a clear, strong voice, 'Father, Thy will, Thy will be done. Thus saith the Lord, If of any of you that is a father, his child ask bread, will he give him a stone? If he ask a fish, will he give him a scorpion? Ask bread of Me, My children, and I will give you bread. I will not, will not give you a scorpion. By this judge of what ye shall now hear.'

She spoke much (all as in the person of God, and mostly in Scripture words) of the fulfilling of the prophecies, the coming of Christ now at hand, and the spreading of the gospel over all the earth. Then she exhorted us not to be in haste in judging her spirit to be or not to be of God; but to wait upon God, and He would teach us, if we conferred not with flesh and blood. She added, with many enforcements, that we must watch and pray, and take up our cross, and be still before God.

Two or three of our company were much affected, and believed she spoke by the Spirit of God. But this was in no wise clear to me.⁹ The motion might be either hysterical or artificial. And the same words any person of a good understanding and well versed in the Scriptures might have spoken. But I let the matter alone; knowing this, that 'if it be not of God, it will come to nought.'¹⁰

Friday, February 9, 1739. A note was given me at Wapping in (nearly) these words:

Sir,

Your prayers are desired for a child that is lunatic and sore vexed day and night, that our Lord would be pleased to heal him, as he did those in the days of his flesh, and that he would give his parents faith and patience till his time is come.

Tue[sday, February] 13[, 1739] I received the following note.

Sir,

⁸ Wesley, "January 21, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 32.

⁹ In his journal entry of June 22, 1739, Wesley wrote of "one who 'did run well', till he was hindered by some of those called French Prophets. 'Woe unto the prophets, saith the Lord, who prophesy in my name, and I have not sent them.' At Weavers' Hall I endeavoured to point them out, and earnestly exhorted all that followed after holiness to avoid as fire all who do not speak according 'to the law and the testimony'." See Wesley, "June 22, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 72. Wesley seems to by this time to have come to a conclusion about the lacking veracity of the French Prophets.

¹⁰ Wesley, "January 28, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 33.

I return you hearty thanks for your prayers on Friday for my tortured son. He grows worse and worse. I hope the nearer deliverance. I beg your prayers still to our Redeemer, who will cure him, or give us patience to bear the rod, hoping it is dipped in the blood of the Lamb.

Sir, he is taken with grievous weeping, his heart beating as if it would beat through his ribs. He swells ready to burst, sweats great drops, runs about beating and tearing himself. He bites and pinches me, so that I carry his marks always on me. He lays his hands on the fire and sticks pins in his flesh. Thus he has been these five years. He is in his eleventh year, a wonder of affliction; I hope, of mercy also, and that I shall praise him who is my Redeemer and my God.'

Saturday, February 17, 1739. A few of us prayed with him, and from that time (as his parents since informed us) he had more rest (although not a full deliverance) than he had had for two years before.¹¹

Friday, March 2, 1739. One of the most surprising instances of his power which I ever remember to have seen was on the Tuesday following, when I visited one who was above measure enraged at 'this new way' and zealous in opposing it. Finding argument to be of no other effect than to inflame her more and more, I broke off the dispute and desired we might join in prayer, which she so far consented to as to kneel down. In a few minutes she fell into an extreme agony, both of body and soul, and soon after cried out with the utmost earnestness, 'Now I know, I am forgiven for Christ's sake.' Many other words she uttered to the same effect, witnessing a hope full of immortality. And from that hour God hath set her face as a flint to declare the faith which before she persecuted.¹²

Thursday, March 8, 1739. I called upon her and a few of her neighbors, who were met together in the evening, among whom I found a gentleman of the same spirit she had been of, earnestly labouring to pervert the truth of the gospel. To prevent his going on, as the less evil of the two, I entered directly into the controversy, touching both the cause and the fruits of justification. In the midst of the dispute one who sat at a small distance felt as it were the piercing of a sword, and before she could be brought to another house, whither I was going, could not avoid crying out aloud, even in the street. But no sooner had we made our request known to God than he sent her help from his holy place.¹³

Sunday, April 15, 1739. Between five and six we went to Rose Green. It rained hard in Bristol, but not a drop fell upon us while I declared to about five thousand, 'Christ our wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.'¹⁴

¹¹ Wesley, "February 9, 13, 17, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 34.

¹² Wesley, "March 2, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 35.

¹³ Wesley, "March 8, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 35.

¹⁴ Wesley, "April 15, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 48. Note: Rose Green is a community approximately two to three miles from the heart of Bristol. A large rain storm in Bristol would most likely also cause rain to fall in Rose Green as well.

Tuesday, April 17, 1739. Thence I went to Baldwin Street and expounded, as it came in course, the fourth chapter of the Acts. We then called upon God to confirm his word. Immediately one that stood by (to our no small surprise) cried out aloud, with the utmost vehemence, even as in the agonies of death. But we continued in prayer, till 'a new song was put in her mouth, a thanksgiving unto our God.' Soon after two other persons (well known in this place, as labouring to live in all good conscience towards all men) were seized with strong pain and constrained to 'roar for the disquietness of their heart'. But it was not long before they likewise burst forth into praise to God their saviour. The last who called upon God, as out of the belly of hell, was J[ohn] E[llis], a stranger in Bristol. And in a short space he also was overwhelmed with joy and love, knowing that God had healed his backslidings. So many living witnesses hath God given that 'his hand is *still* stretched out to heal, and that signs and wonders are even *now* wrought by his holy child Jesus'.¹⁵

Wednesday, April 18, 1739. R[ebecc]a M[organ] was scarcely able either to speak or look up. 'The sorrows of death compassed her about, the pains of hell got hold upon her.' We poured out our complaints before God and showed him of her trouble. And he soon showed he is a God 'that heareth prayer'. She felt in herself that, 'being justified freely', she had 'peace with God, through Jesus Christ'. She 'rejoiced in hope of the glory of God', 'and the love of God was shed abroad in her heart.'¹⁶

Saturday, April 21, 1739. A young man was suddenly seized with violent trembling all over, and in a few minutes, 'the sorrows of his heart being enlarged', sunk down to the ground. But we ceased not calling upon God, till he raised him up, full of 'peace and joy in the Holy Ghost'.¹⁷

Monday, April 23, 1739. In the evening ... a young man, after a sharp (though short) agony, both of body and mind, found his soul filled with peace, 'knowing in whom he had believed'.¹⁸

Thursday, April 26, 1739. While I was preaching at Newgate on these words, 'He that believeth hath everlasting life,' I was sensibly led, without any previous design, to declare strongly and explicitly that God 'willeth all men to be *thus* saved' and to pray that, if this were not the truth of God, he would not suffer the blind to go out of the way; but, if it were, he would bear witness to His Word. Immediately one and another and another sunk to the earth: they dropped on every side as thunderstruck. One of them cried aloud. We besought God in her behalf, and he turned her heaviness into joy. A second being in the same agony, we called upon God for her also, and he spoke peace unto her soul. In the evening I was again pressed in spirit to declare that Christ 'gave himself a

¹⁵ Wesley, "April 17, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 49.

¹⁶ Wesley, "April 18, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 50.

¹⁷ Wesley, "April 21, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 50.

¹⁸ Wesley, "April 23, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 51.

ransom for all'. And almost before we called upon him to set his seal, he answered. One was so wounded by the sword of the Spirit that you would have imagined she could not live a moment. But immediately his abundant kindness was showed, and she loudly sang of his righteousness.¹⁹

Friday, April 27, 1739. All Newgate rang with the cries of those whom the Word of God cut to the heart, two of whom were in a moment filled with joy, to the astonishment of those that beheld them.²⁰

Sunday, April 29, 1739. [After delivering five sermons at various places and participating in a love-feast on that day,] O how has God renewed my strength! Who used ten years ago to be faint and weary with preaching *twice* in *one* day!²¹

Monday, April 30, 1739. We understood that many were offended at the cries of those on whom the power of God came, among whom was a physician, who was much afraid there might be fraud or imposture in the case. Today one whom he had known many years was the first (while I was preaching in Newgate) who broke out into 'strong cries and tears'. He could hardly believe his own eyes and ears. He went and stood close to her, and observed every symptom, till great drops of sweat ran down her face, and all her bones shook. He then knew not what to think, being clearly convinced it was not fraud, nor yet any natural disorder. But when both her soul and body were healed in a moment, he acknowledged the finger of God.²²

Tuesday, May 1, 1739. Many were offended again and, indeed, much more than before. For at Baldwin Street my voice could scarce be heard amidst the groanings of some and the cries of others, called aloud to 'him that is mighty to save'. I desired all that were sincere of heart to beseech with me 'the Prince exalted for us' that he would 'proclaim deliverance to the captives'. And he soon showed that he heard our voice. Many of those who had been long in the darkness saw the dawn of a great light, and ten persons (I afterwards found) then began to say in faith, 'My Lord and my God!'

A Quaker who stood by was not a little displeased at 'the dissimulation of these creatures', and was biting his lips and knitting his brows, when he dropped down as thunderstruck. The agony he was in was even terrible to behold. We besought God not to lay folly to his charge. And he soon lifted up his head and cried aloud, "Now I know, thou art a prophet of the Lord."²³

Wednesday, May 2, 1739. One who long had asserted the contrary was there, when a young woman came in (who could say before, 'I know that *my* Redeemer liveth')

¹⁹ Wesley, "April 26, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 51-2.

²⁰ Wesley, "April 27, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 52.

²¹ Wesley, "April 29, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 52.

²² Wesley, "April 30, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 52-3.

²³ Wesley, "May 1, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 53.

all in tears and in deep anguish of spirit. She said she had been reasoning with herself how these things could be, till she was perplexed more and more, and she now found the Spirit of God was departed from her. We began to pray, and she cried out, 'He is come! He is come! I gain rejoice in God *my* Saviour.' Just as we rose from giving thanks, another person reeled four or five steps and then dropped down. We prayed with her, and left her strongly convinced of sin and earnestly groaning for deliverance.²⁴

Wednesday, May 2, 1739. I did not mention one J[oh]n H[aydo]n, a weaver, who was at Baldwin Street the night before. He was (I understood) a man of regular life and conversation, one that constantly attended the public prayers and sacrament, and was zealous for the Church against Dissenters of every denomination. Being informed that 'people fell into strange fits at the societies', he came to see and judge for himself. But he was less satisfied than before, insomuch that he went about to his acquaintance one after another, till one in the morning, and laboured above measure to convince them it was 'a delusion of the devil'. We were going home when one met us in the street and informed us that J[oh]n H[aydo]n was fallen raving mad. It seems he had sat down to dinner, but had a mind first to end a sermon he had borrowed on *Salvation by Faith*. In reading the last page he changed colour, fell off his chair, and began screaming terribly and beating himself against the ground. The neighbours were alarmed and flocked together to the house. Between one and two I came in and found him on the floor, the room being full of people, whom his wife would have kept without,; be he cried aloud, 'No; let them all come, let all the world see the just judgment of God.' Two or three men were holding him as well as they could. He immediately fixed his eyes upon *me* and, stretching out his hand, cried, 'Ay, this is he, who I said was a deceiver of the people. But God has overtaken me. I said it was all a delusion. But this is not delusion.' He then roared out, 'O thou devil! Thou cursed devil! Yea, thou legion of devils! Thou canst not stay. Christ will cast thee out. I know his work is begun. Tear me to pieces, if thou wilt, but thou canst not hurt me.' He then beat himself against the ground again, his breast heaving at the same time, as in the pangs of death, and great drops of sweat trickling down his face. We all betook ourselves to prayer. His pangs ceased, and both his body and soul were set at liberty.

Thence I went to Baptist Mills. ... Returning to J[oh]n H[aydo]n, we found his voice was lost and his body weak as that of an infant. But his soul was in peace, full of love, and 'rejoicing in hope of the glory of God'.²⁵

Wednesday, May 2, 1739. The women of our society met at seven. During our prayer one of them fell into a violent agony, but soon after began to cry out with confidence, 'My Lord and my God!'²⁶

Wednesday, May 9, 1739. In the evening, while I was declaring that Jesus Christ had 'given himself a ransom for all', three persons almost at once sunk down as dead,

²⁴ Wesley, "May 2, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 53.

²⁵ Wesley, "May 2, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 54-5.

²⁶ Wesley, "May 2, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 55.

having all their sins set in array before them. But in a short time they were raised up and knew that ‘the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world’, had taken away their sins.²⁷

Wednesday, May 16, 1739. While I was declaring at Baptist Mills, ‘He was wounded for our transgressions,’ a middle-aged man began violently beating his breast and crying to him ‘by whose stripes we are healed’. During our prayer God put a new song in his mouth. Some mocked and others owned the hand of God.²⁸

Saturday, May 19, 1739. At Weavers’ Hall a woman first, and then a boy (about fourteen years of age), was overwhelmed with sin and sorrow and fear. But we cried to God, and their souls were delivered.²⁹

Sunday, May 20, 1739. Although they saw ‘signs and wonders’ (for so I must term them), yet many would not believe. They could not indeed *deny* the facts, but they could *explain* them away. Some said, ‘These were purely *natural* effects; the people fainted away only because of the heat and closeness of the rooms.’ And others were sure ‘It was all a cheat: they might help it if they would. Else why were these things only in their private societies? Why were they not done in the face of the sun?’ Today, Monday, [May] 21[, 1739], our Lord answered for himself. For while I was enforcing these words, ‘Be still, and know that I am God,’ he began to make bare his arm, not in a close room, neither in private, but in the open air, and before more than two thousand witnesses. One and another and another was struck to the earth, exceedingly trembling at the presence of his power. Others cried with a loud and bitter cry, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ And in less than an hour seven persons, wholly unknown to me till that time, were rejoicing and singing, and with all their might giving thanks to the God of their salvation.³⁰

Monday, May 21, 1739. In the evening I was interrupted at Nicholas Street, almost as soon as I had begun to speak, by the cries of one who was ‘pricked at the heart’, and strongly groaned for pardon and peace. ... Another person dropped down, close to the one who was a strong asserter of the contrary doctrine. While he stood astonished at the sight, a little boy near him was seized in the same manner. A young man who stood behind fixed his eyes on him and sunk down himself as one dead, but soon began to roar out and beat himself against the ground, so that six men could scarcely hold him. His name was Thomas Maxfield. Except J[oh]n H[aydo]n³¹, I never saw one so torn of the evil one. Meanwhile many others began to cry out to ‘the Saviour of all’, that he would come and help them, insomuch that all the house (and indeed all the street for

²⁷ Wesley, “May 9, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 57.

²⁸ Wesley, “May 16, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 58.

²⁹ Wesley, “May 19, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 58.

³⁰ Wesley, “May 20, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19 60-1.

³¹ See the first of the events on May 2, 1739 above.

some space) was in an uproar. But we continued in prayer, and before ten the greater part found rest to their souls.³²

Monday, May 21, 1739. I was called from supper to one who, feeling in herself such a conviction as she never had known before, had run out of the society in all haste, *that she might not expose herself*. But the hand of God followed her still, so that after going a few steps, she was forced to be carried home, and when she was there grew worse and worse. She was in a violent agony when we came. We called upon God, and her soul found rest.³³

Monday, May 21, 1739. About twelve I was greatly importuned to go and visit one person more. She had only one struggle after I came, and was then filled with peace and joy. I think twenty-nine in all had their heaviness turned into joy this day.³⁴

Monday, June 4, 1739. Many came to me and earnestly advised me ‘not to preach abroad in the afternoon, because there was a combination of several persons who threatened terrible things’. This report being spread abroad brought many thither of ‘the better sort of people’ (so called) and added, I believe, more than a thousand to the ordinary congregation. The Scripture to which not my choice, but the providence of God directed me was, ‘Fear not thou, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.’ The power of God came with his Word, so that none scoffed, or interrupted, or opened his mouth.³⁵

Friday, June 15, 1739. In the evening I went to a society at Wapping³⁶, weary in body and faint in spirit. I intended to speak on Romans 3:19, but could not tell how to open my mouth; and all the time we were singing my mind was full of some place, I knew not where, in the Epistle to the Hebrews. I begged God to direct, and opened the book on Heb. 10:9, ‘Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus; by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh ... let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.’ While I was earnestly inviting all sinners ‘to enter into the holiest’ by this ‘new and living way’, many of those that heard begun to call upon God, with strong cries and tears. Some sunk down and there remained not strength in them; others exceedingly trembled and quaked; some were torn with a kind of convulsive motion in every part of their bodies, and that so violently that often four or five persons could not hold one of

³² Wesley, “May 20, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 61.

³³ Wesley, “May 20, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 61

³⁴ Wesley, “May 20, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 62.

³⁵ Wesley, “June 4, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 63.

³⁶ A district in London as Wesley had returned from Bristol on June 13, 1739 (see Wesley, “June 13, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 68).

them. I have seen many hysterical and many epileptic fits, but none of them were like these, in many respects. I immediately prayed that God would not suffer those who were weak to be offended. But one woman was offended greatly, being sure ‘they might help it’ if they would—no one should persuade her to the contrary; and was got three or four yards when she also dropped down, in as violent an agony as the rest. Twenty-six of those who had been thus affected (most of whom during the prayers which were made for them were in a moment filled with peace and joy) promised to call upon me the next day. But only eighteen came; by talking closely with whom I found reason to believe that some of them had gone home to their house justified. The rest seemed to be patiently waiting for it.³⁷

Saturday, June 16, 1739. We met at Fetter Lane to humble ourselves before God and own he had justly withdrawn his Spirit from us for our manifold unfaithfulness. We acknowledged our having grieved him by our divisions, ‘one saying, I am of Paul, another, I am of Apollos’; by our leaning again to our own works and trusting in them instead of Christ; be our resting in those little beginnings of sanctification which it had pleased him to work in our souls; and above all by blaspheming his work among us, imputing it either to nature, to the force of imagination and animal spirits, or even to the delusion of the devil. In that hour we found God with us as at the first. Some fell prostrate upon the ground. Others burst out, as with one consent, into loud praise and thanksgiving. And many openly testified, there had been no such day as this since January the first preceding.³⁸

Friday, June 22, 1739. In the afternoon I preached at the Fishponds but had no life or spirit in me and was much in doubt whether God would not lay me aside and send other labourers into his harvest. I came to the society full of this thought, and began in much weakness to explain, ‘Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God.’ I told them they were not to judge of the Spirit whereby anyone spoke, either by *appearances*, or by *common report*, or by their own *inward feelings*. No, nor by any dreams, visions, or revelations supposed to be made to their souls, any more than by their tears or any involuntary effects wrought upon their bodies. I warned them all these were in themselves of a doubtful, disputable nature: they *might* be from God and they *might not*, and were therefore not simply to be relied on (any more than simply to be condemned) but to be tried by a farther rule, to be brought to the only certain test, ‘the law and the testimony’. While I was speaking one before me dropped down as dead, and presently a second and a third. Five others sunk down in half an hour, most of whom were in violent agonies. ‘The pains as of hell came about them; the snares of death overtook them.’ In their trouble we called upon the Lord, and he gave us an answer of peace. One indeed continued an hour in strong pain, and one or two more for three days. But the rest were greatly comforted in that hour and went away rejoicing and praising God.³⁹

³⁷ Wesley, “June 15, 1739,” *Work*, vol. 19, 70.

³⁸ Wesley, “June 16, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 70-1.

³⁹ Wesley, “June 22, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19., 73.

Saturday, June 23, 1739. I spoke severally with those who had been so troubled the night before. Some of them I found were only convinced of sin; others had indeed found rest to their souls. This evening another was seized with strong pangs. But in a short time her soul also was delivered.⁴⁰

Sunday, June 24, 1739. As I was riding to Rose Green, in a smooth, plain part of the road, my horse suddenly pitched upon his head and rolled over and over. I received no other hurt than a little bruise on one side, which for the present I felt not, but preached without pain to six or seven thousand people on that important direction, 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.' In the evening a girl of thirteen or fourteen, and four or five other persons, some of whom had felt the power of God before, were deeply convinced of sin and, with sighs and groans which could not be uttered, called upon God for deliverance.⁴¹

Saturday, June 30, 1739. At Weavers' Hall seven or eight persons were constrained to roar aloud, while the sword of the Spirit was 'dividing asunder their souls and spirits and joints and marrow'. But they were all relieved upon prayer, and sang 'praises unto our God, and unto the Lamb that liveth for ever and ever'.⁴²

Sunday, July 1, 1739. A young woman sunk down at Rose Green, in a violent agony both of body and mind; as did five or six persons in the evening at the New Room, at whose cries many were greatly offended. The same offence was given in the morning by one at Weavers' Hall, and by eight or nine others at Gloucester Lane in the evening. The first that was deeply touched was L___ W___, whose mother had been not a little displeased a day or two before when she was told how her daughter had 'exposed herself' before all the congregation. The mother herself was the next, who dropped down and lost her senses in a moment, but went home with her daughter full of joy, as did most of those that had been in pain.⁴³

Saturday, July 7, 1739. I had an opportunity to talk with [George Whitefield] of those outward signs which had so often accompanied the inward work of God. I found his objections were chiefly grounded on gross misrepresentations of matter of fact. But the next day he had an opportunity of informing himself better. For no sooner had he begun (in the application of his sermon) to invite all sinners to believe in Christ, than four persons sunk down close to him, almost in the same moment. One of them lay without either sense of motion. A second trembled exceedingly. The third had strong convulsions all over his body but made no noise, unless by groans. The fourth, equally convulsed,

⁴⁰ Wesley, "June 23, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 73.

⁴¹ Wesley, "June 24, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 73-4.

⁴² Wesley, "June 30, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 75.

⁴³ Wesley, "July 1, 1739," *Works*, vol. 19, 77.

called upon God with strong cries and tears. From this time, I trust, we shall all suffer God to carry on his own work in the way that pleaseth him.⁴⁴

Monday, July 30, 1739⁴⁵. Two more were in strong pain, both their souls and bodies being wellnigh torn asunder. But though we cried unto God, there was no answer, neither did he as yet deliver them at all. One of these had been remarkably zealous against those that cried out and made a noise, being sure that ‘any of them might help it if they would.’ And the same opinion she was in still till the moment she was struck through as with a sword, and fell trembling to the ground. She then cried aloud, though not articulately, her words being swallowed up. In this pain she continued twelve or fourteen hours, and then her soul was set at liberty. But her master (for she was a servant till that time, at a gentleman’s in town) forbid her returning to him, saying he would have none in his house ‘who had received the Holy Ghost’.⁴⁶

Wesley’s Field-Preaching During the Seven Months After January 1, 1739

On April 2, 1739, in response to a request from George Whitefield, Wesley preached his first “field-preaching” sermon. He writes on this date, “At four in the afternoon I submitted to ‘be more vile’, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people.”⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Wesley, “July 7, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 78-9. Although this was a supernatural occurrence involving George Whitefield, the timing and nature of what happened seems to be a direct spiritual response to Whitefield’s objections to the manifestations seen during Wesley’s preaching. The reaction of these four persons occurred the day of the discussion between Whitefield and Wesley. Also the four persons had four different reactions, each representing a type of outward sign that had been occurring. Whitefield not only saw the veracity of the outward signs but also the veracity of the different ways that the signs manifested.

⁴⁵ No supernatural occurrences are recorded in Wesley’s journal after July 7, 1739 for almost three weeks. On July 23, 1739, Wesley wrote, “On several evenings this week, and particularly on Friday [July 20], many were deeply convinced, but none were delivered from that painful conviction. ‘The children came to the birth, but there was not strength to bring forth.’ I fear we have grieved the Spirit of the jealous God, by questioning his work, and that therefore he is withdrawn from us for a season. ‘But he will return and abundantly pardon.’” See Wesley, “July 23, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 82. The return occurred exactly one week later, on July 30, 1739.

⁴⁶ Wesley, “July 30, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 82.

⁴⁷ Wesley, “April 2, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 46.

The large crowds that gathered to hear Wesley may not be “supernatural occurrences” in the sense of other events reported. However, the size of the crowds during the first seven months of 1739 are noteworthy. They include “upward of ten thousand souls” present at Rose Green on May 26,⁴⁸ “several thousand witnesses” at Weavers’ Hall on May 28,⁴⁹ and “about six thousand persons” in the morning and “eight or nine thousand” in the afternoon of June 3, 1739.⁵⁰ At Blackheath in London George Whitefield was scheduled but instead invited Wesley to preach to “twelve or fourteen thousand people.”⁵¹ On June 17, 1739, Wesley preached to likely the largest crowd throughout his life: “At five I preached on Kennington Common, to about fifteen thousand people.”⁵²

On December 10, 1734, Wesley had written to his father about ministering to upwards of two thousand in Epworth: “Two thousand souls! I see not how it is possible for such a one as me to take care of one hundred.”⁵³ The clergyman who did not think he could care for one hundred was preaching to thousands!

⁴⁸ Wesley, “May 26, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 62.

⁴⁹ Wesley, “May 28, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 62.

⁵⁰ Wesley, “June 3, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 63.

⁵¹ Wesley, “June 14, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 69.

⁵² Wesley, “June 17, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 71. Wesley preached to “six or seven thousand people” that morning so that on this one day Wesley may have preached to a total of twenty-one or twenty-two thousand people.

⁵³ Wesley, “March 28, 1739,” *Works*, vol. 19, 42. This journal entry contains in full the letter that Wesley had written to his father as to why he preferred the university life to parish ministry at Epworth.

APPENDIX B

SUPERNATURAL OCCURRENCES IN CHARLES WESLEY'S JOURNAL FROM MAY 21 TO DECEMBER 26, 1738

Charles Wesley and the Day of Pentecost

Sunday, May 21, 1738. THE DAY OF PENTECOST. I waked in hope and expectation of His coming. At nine my brother and some friends came, and sang an hymn to the Holy Ghost. My comfort and hope were hereby increased. In about half-an-hour they went: I betook myself to prayer; the substance as follows :--

"Oh Jesus, thou hast said, 'I will come unto you ; 'thou hast said, ' I will send the Comforter unto you ; thou hast said, 'My Father and I will come unto you, and make our abode with you.' Thou art God who canst not lie; I wholly rely upon thy most true promise: accomplish it in thy time and manner." Having said this, I was composing myself to sleep, in quietness and peace, when I heard one come in (Mrs. Musgrave, I thought, by the voice) and say, "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise, and believe, and thou shalt be healed of all thy infirmities." I wondered how it should enter into her head to speak in that manner. The words struck me to the heart. I sighed, and said within myself, "O that Christ would but speak thus to me!" I lay musing and trembling: then thought, "But what if it should be Him? I will send at least to see." I rang, and, Mrs. Turner coming, I desired her to send up Mrs. Musgrave. She went down, and, returning, said, "Mrs. Musgrave had not been here." My heart sunk within me at the word, and I hoped it might be Christ indeed. However, I sent her down again to inquire, and felt in the meantime a strange palpitation of heart. I said, yet feared to say, "I believe, I believe!" She came up again and said, "It was I, a weak, sinful creature, spoke; but the words were Christ's: he commanded me to say them, and so constrained me that I could not forbear."

I sent for Mr. Bray, and asked him whether I believed. He answered, I ought not to doubt of it: it was Christ spoke to me. He knew it; and willed us to pray together: "But first," said he, "I will read what I have casually opened upon: 'Blessed is the man whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth no sin, and in whose spirit is no guile.'" Still I felt a violent opposition and reluctance to believe; yet still the Spirit of God strove with my own and the evil spirit, till by degrees he chased away the darkness of my unbelief. I found myself convinced, I knew not how, nor when; and immediately fell to intercession.

Mr. Bray then told me, his sister has been ordered by Christ to come and say those words to me. This she afterwards confirmed, and related to me more at large the manner of her believing. At night, and nearly the moment I was taken ill, she dreamt she heard one knock at the door: she went down, and opened it; saw a person in white; caught hold of and asked him who he was; was answered, "I am Jesus Christ," and cried out, with great vehemence, "Come in, come in!"

She waked in a fright. It was immediately suggested to her, "You must not mind this: it is all a dream, an illusion." She continued wavering and uneasy all Friday till evening prayers. No sooner were they begun than she found herself full of the power of faith, so that she could scarce contain herself, and almost doubted whether she was sober, At the same time she was enlarged in love and prayer for all mankind, and commanded to go and assure me from Christ of my recovery, soul and body. She returned home repeating with all joy and triumph, "I believe, I believe:" yet her heart failed her, and she durst not say the words to me that night.

On Sunday morning she took Mr. Bray aside, burst into tears, and informed him of the matter; objecting she was a poor weak sinful creature, and should she go to a Minister? She could not do it; nor rest till she did. He asked whether she had ever found herself so before. "No, never." "Why, then," said he, "go. Remember Jonah. You declare promises, not threatenings. Go in the name of the Lord. Fear not your own weakness. Speak you the words: Christ will do the work. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hath he ordained strength."

They prayed together, and she then went up, but durst not come in till she had prayed again by herself. About six minutes after she had left him, he found and felt, while she was speaking the words, that Christ was with us. I never heard words uttered with like solemnity. The sound of her voice was entirely changed into that of Mrs. Musgrave. (If I can be sure of anything sensible.) I rose and looked into the Scripture. The words that first presented were, "And now, Lord, what is my hope truly my hope is even in thee." I then cast down my eye, and met, "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even a thanksgiving unto our God. Many shall see it, and fear, and shall put their trust in the Lord." Afterwards I opened upon Isaiah xl. 1: "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God: speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sin."

I now found myself at peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ. My temper for the rest of the day was, mistrust of my own great, but before unknown, weakness. I saw that by faith I stood; by the continual support of faith, which kept me from falling, though of myself I am ever sinking into sin. I went to bed still sensible of my own weakness, (I humbly hope to be more and more so,) yet confident of Christ's protection.¹

Monday, May 22, 1738. Under his protection I waked next morning, and rejoiced in reading the 107th Psalm, so nobly describing what God had done for my soul. I fell asleep again, and waked out of a dream that I was fighting with two devils; had one under my feet; the other faced me some time, but faded, and sunk, and vanished away, upon my telling him I belonged to Christ.

To-day I saw him chiefly as my King, and found him in his power: but saw little of the love of Christ crucified, or of my sins past: though more, I humbly hope, of my own weakness and his strength. I had many evil thoughts darted into my mind, but I rejected them immediately yet not I). At noon I rose, continually fainting, nevertheless upheld. I was greatly strengthened by Isaiah xliii., which God directed me to. "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

¹ Charles Wesley, "May 21, 1738," *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, M.A., Volume I*, editors S.T. Kimbrough, Jr. and Kenneth G.C. Newport (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2008), vol. 1, 90-92.

My brother coming, we joined in intercession for him. In the midst of prayer, I almost believed the Holy Ghost was coming upon him. In the evening we sang and prayed again. I found myself very weak in body, but thought I ought to pray for my friends, being the only Priest among them. I kneeled down, and was immediately strengthened, both mind and body. The enemy did not lose such an opportunity of tempting me to pride: but, God be praised, my strength did I ascribe unto Him. I was often since assisted to pray readily and earnestly, without a form.

Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but to thy name be the glory!

An old friend called to see me, under great apprehensions that I was running mad. His fears were not a little increased by my telling him the prayer of faith had healed me when sick at Oxford. "He looked to see the rays of light about my head," he said, and more to that purpose. I begged him, for his own sake, not to pass sentence till he had his full evidence concerning me. This he could not promise, but faintly prayed me to flee from London, and, in despair of me, took his leave.

It was morning before I could get to sleep. Many motions of pride arose, and were continually beaten down by Christ my King. The devil also tempted me to impatience through pain; but God turned it into an occasion of resignation.²

Tuesday, May 23, 1738. I waked under the protection of Christ, and gave myself up, soul and body, to him. At nine I began an hymn upon my conversion, but was persuaded to break oil, for fear of pride.³ Mr. Bray coming, encouraged me to proceed in spite of Satan. I prayed Christ to stand by me, and finished the hymn. Upon my afterwards showing it to Mr. Bray, the devil threw in a fiery dart, suggesting, that it was wrong, and I had displeased God. My heart sunk within me; when, casting my eye upon a Prayer-book, I met with an answer for him. "Why boastest thou thyself, thou tyrant, that thou canst do mischief" Upon this, I clearly discerned it was a device of the enemy to keep back glory from God. And it is most usual with him to preach humility, when speaking will endanger his kingdom, or do honour to Christ. Least of all would he have us tell what things God has done for our souls, so tenderly does he guard us from pride. But God has showed me, he can defend me from it, while speaking for him. In his name therefore, and through his strength, I will perform my vows unto the Lord, of not hiding his righteousness within my heart, if it should ever please him to plant it there. Throughout this day he has kept up in me a constant sense of my own weakness. At night I was tempted to think the reason of my believing before others was, my sincerity. I rejected the thought with horror, and remained more than conqueror, through Him that loved me.⁴

² Charles Wesley, "May 22, 1738," *The Manuscript Journal*, vol. 1, 92-93.

³ William Cannon, then Dean of the Candler School of Theology, writes: "At this time, so far as we know, Charles had not written a single hymn. Hymnody was the bequest of the Holy Spirit to him on his conversion." William R. Cannon, "John Wesley's Years in Georgia," *Association of Methodist Historical Societies*, 1963-07, 7, accessed December 1, 2019, <http://archives.gcah.org/handle/10516/1330>.

⁴ Charles Wesley, "May 23, 1738," *The Manuscript Journal*, vol. 1, 93-94.

Wednesday, May 24, 1738. Being to receive the sacrament to-day, I was assaulted by the fear of my old accustomed deadness; but soon recovered my confidence in Christ, that he would give me so much sense of his love now, as he saw good for me. I received without any sensible devotion, much as I used to be, only that I was afterwards perfectly calm and satisfied, Without doubt, fear, or scruple. Among our communicants was Mrs. Pratt, who had been with me the night before, and related her receiving Christ in a dream, when under great trouble. His words to her were, "Be of good cheer, thy prayer is heard." From that time to this, being six years, she has enjoyed perfect peace. Most of Saturday night she had spent in intercession for me; as on Sunday morning I experienced.

I was much pleased to-day at the sight of Mr. Ainsworth, a little child, full of grief, and fears, and love. At our repeating the line of the hymn, "Now descend, and shake the earth," he fell down as in an agony. I found a general delight in their singing, but little attention: yet was not disquieted.

We passed the afternoon in prayer, singing, and conference. For one half hour I was with Miss Delamotte; now unconvinced, and full of dispute. I bore my testimony with plainness and confidence, declaring what God had done for my soul. Not hurt, but strengthened hereby.

From her I went to Miss Claggetts; young women of a better and more childlike spirit, who calmly and confidently looked for the promises. I was farther comforted by an excellent letter from my namesake in Georgia, persecuted for Christ's sake; on the highest step, I trust, of the legal state.

At eight I prayed by myself for love; with some feeling, and assurance of feeling more. Towards ten, my brother was brought in triumph by a troop of our friends, and declared, "I believe." We sang the hymn with great joy, and parted with prayer. At midnight I gave myself up to Christ; assured I was safe, sleeping or waking. Had continual experience of his power to overrule all temptation; and confessed, with joy and surprise, that he was able to do exceeding abundantly for me, above what I can ask or think.⁵

Other Supernatural Occurrences of Charles Wesley in 1738

June 10, 1738. Mr. Piers came with his wife. The day before our coming had been led to read the Homily on Justification, which convinced him that in him dwelt no good thing. Now he likewise saw that the thoughts of his heart were only evil continually for as much as whatsoever is not of faith is sin. He asked God to give him some comfort and found it in Luke 5:23, etc., 'Whether it is easier to say thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say rise up and walk?' ... This was the very miracle I told him from which God had shown his intention to heal me, and it was a sign of the like to be done by him. Mr. Bray moved for retiring to prayer. We prayed *after God*, again and again and asked him whether he believed Christ could just not manifest himself to his soul. ... He made me pray again and then read Psalm 65. ... Seeing the confidence of Mr. Bray, and the deep humility of Mr. Piers, I began to think the promise would be fulfilled before we left the room. My fellow-worker with God seemed full of faith and the Holy Ghost and told him, if you can

⁵ Charles Wesley, "May 24, 1738," *The Manuscript Journal*, vol. 1, 94-95.

but touch the hem of his garment, you shall be made whole. We prayed for him a third time, the Spirit greatly helping our infirmities, and then asked if he believed. He answered, ‘Yes.’ The Spirit witnessing with our spirits that his heart was as our heart, Bray said, ‘I know of a truth that Christ is in you.’ We were all filled with joy, returned thanks, and prayed for a blessing on his ministry, and then brought him down in triumph.⁶

June 21, 1738. Concerned at having been here several days and done nothing. Preached forgiveness to Mr. Piers’s man, who seemed well disposed for receiving it by a true simplicity. We prayed together and went to public prayers. In the second lesson was the paralytic healed. Came home with the Miss Delamotte, Mrs. Searle, and the man, who declared before us all that God had given him faith by hearing ‘the sick of the palsy healed.’ We returned hearty thanks.⁷

June 28, 1738. I went to Mr. Syms’s, in expectation of Christ. Several of our friends were providentially brought thither. We joined in singing and prayer. The last time we prayed I could not leave off, but was still forced to go on. Rose at last, and saw Mr. Chapman kneeling. Opened the book, and read aloud ... [Matthew 9:20-22]. My heart burned within me while I was reading. At the same time I heard him cry out, with great struggling, “I do believe.” We lifted him up, for he had not power to rise of himself, being quite helpless, exhausted, and in a profuse sweat. An old believer among us owned himself affected with wonderful sympathy. We had the satisfaction of *seeing* Mr. Chapman increase in faith, and returned most hearty thanks to the God of his and our salvation.⁸

July 2, 1738. We sang and prayed again. I observed one of the maids run out, and following, found her full of tears, and joy, and love. I asked what ailed her. She answered, as soon as joy would let her, that ‘Christ died for her!’ She appeared quite overpowered with his love. When the company were gone, she gave the following relation. That during the prayer she was encompassed with thick darkness, when a light broke in at a vast distance shining more and more as we proceeded in prayer. At last the darkness seemed quite dispersed, and she saw our Saviour in a bright cloud, and laboured to run to him. The more she laboured, the nearer he seemed to come. She struggled as in an agony and dreaded the prayer being over before she should apprehend him. When she rose, she ran out, not knowing whither (for her face was covered) till she came close to him. He looked smiling upon her with outstretched arms, and with his crown of thorns on. She was confident, this was only the beginning of joy.⁹

December 11, 1738. Lodged at Mr. [Isaac] Hollis’s, who entertained me with his French Prophets—equal, in his account, if not superior, to the Old Testament ones. While

⁶ Charles Wesley, “May 22, 1738,” *The Manuscript Journal*, vol. 1, 119.

⁷ Charles Wesley, “May 22, 1738,” *The Manuscript Journal*, vol. 1, 123.

⁸ Charles Wesley, “May 22, 1738,” *The Manuscript Journal*, vol. 1, 128.

⁹ Charles Wesley, “May 22, 1738,” *The Manuscript Journal*, vol. 1, 131.

we were undressing, he fell into violent agitations, and gobbled like a turkey-cock. I was frightened and began exorcising him with ‘Thou deaf and dumb devil,’ etc. He soon recovered out of his fit of inspiration. I prayed, and went to bed, not half liking my bedfellow. Did not sleep very sound with Satan so near me.¹⁰

Tuesday, December 26, 1738. George Whitefield preached. Had the Sacrament this and the four following days. On Thursday [December 28] my brother preached; on Friday [December 29], George Whitefield; and on Saturday [December 30], Mr. Robson. The whole week was a festival indeed; a joyful season, holy unto the Lord.¹¹

¹⁰ Charles Wesley, “May 22, 1738,” *The Manuscript Journal*, vol. 1, 156.

¹¹ Charles Wesley, “May 22, 1738,” *The Manuscript Journal*, vol. 1, 157. This is Charles Wesley’s view of the movement of the Spirit leading to the Fetter Lane experience of January 1, 1739.

APPENDIX C

LESSON 2 FROM DBS CURRICULUM

WONDER

“So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female.”

—Genesis 1:27, TEV

2 The Creating God

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

I wonder who made me and my world. If there is a Creator, what is this Creator like? Why was I made? Geologists point to rocks that are billions of years old. Astronomers speak of stars that are millions of light years away. In a universe so big, surely I am only a speck of dust.

ASSIGNMENT

Especially read Genesis 1–2 and the psalms aloud. This week’s preparation is designed for celebration and praise and to establish the habit of daily study and devotion. Find a hymnal for reading or singing the suggested hymns.

- Day 1 Genesis 1:1–2:3 (Creation)
Hymn: “Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee”
- Day 2 Genesis 2:4–25 (second Creation story);
Psalm 8 (praise to the Creator)
Hymn: “For the Beauty of the Earth”
- Day 3 Psalms 19:1–6; 33 (God’s glory and greatness) Hymn: “All Creatures of Our God and King”
- Day 4 Job 38–39 (God’s mystery and majesty);
40:15–41:34 (God’s power)
Hymn: “This is My Father’s World”
- Day 5 Psalms 104; 150 (praise); John 1:1–5 (the Word) Hymn: “How Great Thou Art”
- Day 6 Read and respond to “The Bible Teaching”
and “Marks of Discipleship.”
Hymn: “When Morning Gilds the Skies”
- Day 7 Rest, reflection, prayer, and praise.

PRAYER

Pray daily before study:

“You created me, and you keep me safe;
give me understanding, so that I may learn
your laws” (Psalm 119:73, TEV).

Prayer concerns for this week:

WONDER

Day 1 Genesis 1:1–2:3 (Creation)

Day 4 Job 38–39 (God's mystery and majesty);
40:15–41:34 (God's power)

Day 2 Genesis 2:4–25 (second Creation story);
Psalm 8 (praise to the Creator)

Day 5 Psalms 104; 150 (praise); John 1:1–5 (the
Word)

Day 3 Psalms 19:1–6; 33 (God's glory and great-
ness)

Day 6 "The Bible Teaching" and "Marks of
Discipleship"

DISCIPLE

THE BIBLE TEACHING

The Hebrew verb for *create* refers to the activity of God, not to human activity (Genesis 1:1). Two ideas are contained in the verb *create*. First, God freely, purposefully creates order out of chaos. Second, God arranges and designs that creation.

"The heavens and the earth" means the immeasurable universe, all that was or is or ever will be.

"The earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep" (1:2) refers to a cosmic emptiness, a formless darkness, sometimes referred to as a "sea of chaos." The ancients believed that all creation originated from a dark, watery chaos, "the deep." Look up Psalm 24:1-2. "A wind from God swept over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2). Other translations for "swept over" could be "hovered," "soared," or "trembled."

The Hebrews did not believe that the Creator was simply one of a group of gods. They did not believe that two gods, one good and one evil, battled to bring creation into existence. Rather, they believed that the one and only Lord of the universe, the One who had created them to be a covenant people and who had delivered them from slavery, was Author and Designer of all that is.

What Is God Like?

Then God *spoke*. The universe was created by a *word* (Genesis 1:3). Jews and Christians are not pantheists. We do not believe that God and the universe are one. We are not a part of the great universal Spirit, the way a drop of water is a part of an ocean. No, a separateness exists between God and the created order. God spoke, and order came into being. God stands apart yet involved. God stays close, in contact with that creation.

Later when Jesus Christ came, Christians understood that in him the Word had become a human being. "Word" became a synonym for Jesus Christ. John had Genesis 1:3 in mind when he wrote, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things came into being through him. . . ."

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:1-14). By God's word the universe came into being. Later that Word walked among us.

The apostle Paul also wanted people to know that the Word God spoke in Creation was the same Word God spoke on the cross. "For in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible. . . . For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, . . . by making peace through the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:16-20). Thus Christians have come to perceive the Creation story.

NOTES, REFLECTIONS, AND QUESTIONS

WONDER

Wonder

From the beginning, people have pondered the mystery of Creation. Why am I here? Where did the universe come from? Little children ask, Who made God?

Giraffes and elephants amuse us; the Rocky Mountains and the Milky Way amaze us; a newborn baby fills us with wonder. With the psalmist we ask,

“What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?” (Psalm 8:4).

We can only respond with wonder as we listen in as God confronts Job (Job 38–41). Those four chapters lay before our eyes the order, majesty, and mystery of Creation. They sing of the glory, goodness, and power of the Creator.

Recognize that for our purposes in this lesson, we are lifting this jewel from its setting in Job in order to observe the mighty drama in Creation. In Job, as you will see in a later lesson, faith and suffering are the issue, and these chapters record God’s response to Job’s questioning God’s purpose and rule.

But the point of Job for us here is

- that the wonders of God’s creation are beyond the grasp of our minds;
- that human understanding and divine understanding are vastly different;
- that our power and God’s power cannot be compared;
- that human values and God’s values are worlds apart;
- and above all else, that this Creator cares, that is, loves the creation.

What response shall we make? Only wonder. Only praise.

The Bible does not try to prove the existence of God.

Rather, the Bible explodes in praise of God’s creative power. The Bible answers the questions of the heart by celebrating God’s creativity and pointing toward human response.

Not a scientific account of some “big bang” theory, not a newspaper reporter’s interview with Adam and Eve, the Bible portrays a vibrant creation and a loving and gracious God.

Creation

Genesis is a Greek word that means “beginning,” “origin.” The opening Creation account (Genesis 1:1–2:3) is a carefully worded poem of praise to God, containing the accumulated faith of the covenant people.

The second account (2:4–25), and the older of the two, is a very ancient story, told long ago around campfires, under a star-studded sky. It was recited by one generation to another for centuries before it was written down.

The Creation psalms are songs of worship that spanned the centuries and are as comfortable for us today as they were for ancient Israel. These psalms chant songs of beauty and order and wonder.

NOTES, REFLECTIONS, AND QUESTIONS

DISCIPLE

The assignment urges us to read the Creation passages aloud. Why? In reading the precise poem, the earthy story, and the majestic psalms, we will hear the sounds and feel the cadence. Meaning will come to us through our ears as well as through our eyes.

The Jews, who have lived with Genesis for a long time, are amazed that Christians want to literalize the poetry. To take the imagery of the "first day" or "second day" as twenty-four-hour periods or to look for the bones of Adam in Mesopotamia is to miss the essential point. Even to interpret the days as eons or ages, comparing them to certain geological time frames, is to turn a faith statement into a scientific text.

The symbol of seven days is a faith statement. It implies progressive creativity and careful order. In understanding "the first day," "the second day," and so on, we need to remember that

"a thousand years in your sight
are like yesterday when it is past,
or like a watch in the night" (Psalm 90:4).

But more, seven days are poetic symbols to show form and to remind us to order our lives as God has ordered the universe.

Some people have trouble with science and the Bible. They either say the Bible is not true, or they separate their study of science from their faith as if God does not understand how mountains are formed or how babies are born. But have you wondered why so many scientists are women and men of faith? Because they know how much they do not know, how many questions they cannot answer except by faith. They see that the Creation stories are statements of faith, not geology or biology. They know that in Creation God acted and is continually acting to create and to bring order.

The wise father or mother responds to the child's question, "Who made God?" by answering, "Nobody. That's who God is—the One who started it all, the One who made you and me and everything." Theologians can do no better. They say, with the Bible, that God created order and meaning and purpose out of utter chaos. In the beginning of God's creation, "God said, 'Let there be light'" (Genesis 1:3).

But what shall we think about this created universe? The biblical refrain gives us a hint: "And God saw that it was good" (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25).

Some religions, such as gnosticism, have taught that the material world is evil. The spiritual or the soul is good; the physical or the body is bad. Not so in Judaism and Christianity. Everything God made—knee joints and sex organs, flying fish and monkeys, the law of gravity and the changing seasons—is called good.

Look at the power in the Creation accounts: After mentioning that "God made the two great lights," the sun to light the

NOTES, REFLECTIONS, AND QUESTIONS

WONDER

day and the moon to light the night, the Bible flings off the infinite galaxies of the heavens in a simple phrase, "and the stars" (1:16). God is a great God!



A believer once asked a rabbi, "Why did God give us this mighty poem of Creation?" The rabbi's answer? "To teach us to rest on the sabbath." Why? Because God observed sabbath, and that makes it sacred. When we stop our work, we remember that we are God's creatures and that God will take care of us even when we rest. The loving God wants us to trust, to relax, to enjoy. If we rested, wondered, and appreciated on one day in seven, we would understand Jesus' words, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these" (Matthew 6:28-29). What an antidote for our frenzied, everyday, business-as-usual world.

Not only does the classic poem of faith tell us we belong to God; it tells us much more: We are made "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27). What do you suppose that means?

Stewards

"Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth'" (Genesis 1:26).

In Genesis, men and women are cocreators with God and stewards for God. Our sexuality is part of God's creative goodness, pronounced good by God's word. So we are to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" (1:28). From time to time a heresy appears in the church to make sexuality sinful or dirty or evil. But "male and female he cre-

NOTES, REFLECTIONS, AND QUESTIONS

DISCIPLE

ated them" (1:27). When persons become self-centered, that self-centeredness will affect sexual relations as well as everything else. But God's creation as such is pronounced good.

We are to be stewards of the entire universe. The biblical world was before pesticides and pollutants, but the understanding is there.

We are to keep the air clean.

We are to keep water pure.

We are to save the topsoil and replenish the forests and protect the animals. We have been given a trust to maintain the balance of nature.

Now consider the older of the two Creation stories (2:4-25). Here the order of Creation is different from the other. But like the opening Creation account, this account is a story of faith. Notice the dramatic symbols.

What do you think is the meaning of God's forming "man from the dust of the ground" (2:7)?

What do you think the Scripture means by continuing "and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being" (2:7)?

Why do you suppose some translations use "the man" in 2:23 and others use "Adam"? Look up *Adam*.

What does Eden symbolize to you?

What do you suppose is the symbolic significance of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (2:9)?

We might ask a rabbi, "Why did God give us the story of man and woman?" (2:18-25). The rabbi might answer, "God gave us this story to show that marriage is rooted in Creation. Marriage is God's plan, one flesh, and should not be vio-

NOTES, REFLECTIONS, AND QUESTIONS

WONDER

lated." As Jesus said in Matthew 19:3-12, "What God has joined together, let no one separate" (19:6).

MARKS OF DISCIPLESHIP

We are God's creatures. As Christian disciples, we know we belong to God. God has claim on us. How do you show in the way you live that you belong to God?

Describe a time when you felt such wonder at the majesty of creation that you could only praise God.

If God created the world for our benefit, what does that say about the character of God?

Clearly, the Creation stories give us responsibility for caring for the earth, for plants and animals, birds and fish, air and water. Read again Psalm 8:6-9. What are you doing right now to exercise this stewardship of all creation?

Describe your day of rest. How does it reflect a quiet trust in the great, good, and loving God who has created you and who will sustain you? How could you rest more creatively on your sabbath?

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE

Study further the meaning and use of the word *Word* in John 1:1-5. What is the relationship of this Word to the creative action of God?

Take a walk outdoors. Be aware of the sky, the trees, the water. Take time to watch and listen and feel. Try to see something you have never seen before. From time to time say, "Thank you, God."

NOTES, REFLECTIONS, AND QUESTIONS

Disciples know they belong to God, that God has claim on them.

APPENDIX D

LESSON 2 FROM W&P CURRICULUM

CREATOR

“Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.”

- Genesis 2:7, NRSV

2 The Creating God

OUR HUMAN CONDITION

I wonder who made me and my world. Did all this come about by accident or is there a design? If there is a creator, what is this creator like? In a universe so large, I seem so small. Does this creator even know me? Do I matter? Can I even have a relationship with this Creator?

ASSIGNMENT

“Word and Power” honors the goal of the original DISCIPLE: BECOMING DISCIPLES THROUGH BIBLE STUDY: “to develop disciples of Jesus Christ who know and love God’s Word.” As in the original DISCIPLE study, you will be reading Scripture! “Word and Power” focuses on the Word of God found in Scripture but also with a special emphasis on God’s power displayed in Scripture. We urge you to follow the daily pattern of reading, study, and practices. Make notes in the appropriate space on the next page.

Special Assignment: Read Psalm 19 and then go spend some time outdoors. Take a walk if you are able. Be open to seeing the wonder of God in creation. Watch, listen, and feel for the presence of God. This assignment is listed on Day 3 but can be done any day of the week.

Day 1 Genesis 1:1-2:3 (Creation), read *aloud*.

Day 2 Genesis 2:4-25 (second creation story).

Day 3 Psalm 104 (Song of Creation), read *aloud*.

Special Assignment: Psalm 19 outdoors.

Day 4 Job 38-39. The book of Job (rhymes with “robe”) is about suffering and faith. For this lesson, we are just reading God’s response to Job’s questioning God’s

purpose and rule. Encounter the majesty of creation in this passage. If you have time, also read Job 40:15-41:34.

Day 5 John 1:1-5 (compare to Genesis 1:1-5).

Colossians 1:13-20 (Jesus at creation).

Day 6 Read and respond to “The Bible

Teaching” and “Connecting With God.”

Day 7 Rest, prayer, and class.

PRAYER

Pray daily before reading:

“For you formed my inward parts;

you knitted me together in my mother’s womb.

I praise you,

for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

(Psalm 139:13-14, ESV)

Prayers for this week (include prayer requests, answers to prayers, responses from God, and other connections to God and/or others):

CREATOR

Day 1: Genesis 1:1-2:3. What are your impressions of creation? (Other notes and/or questions.)

Day 2: Genesis 2:4-25. How are the relationships in the text described? (Other notes and/or questions.)

Day 3: Psalm 104. How does this Psalm bring you to praise? (Other notes and/or questions.)

Special Assignment: Read Psalm 19 and spend time outdoors. How did God speak to you?

Day 4: Job 38-39. How is God's power displayed in this passage? (Other notes and/or questions.)

Day 5: John 1:1-5; Colossians 1:13-20. Who is Jesus in regard to creation? (Other notes and/or questions.)

Word and Power

THE BIBLE TEACHING

The Hebrew word for *create* refers to the activity of God, not to human activity (Genesis 1:1). Two ideas are contained in the verb *create*. First, God freely, purposefully creates order out of chaos. Second, God arranges and designs that creation.

“The heavens and the earth” means the immeasurable universe, all that was or is or ever will be.

But what existed before God? Nothing! “In the beginning” means that God created time! There is no “before” because time started when God started it. The Latin phrase, *creatio ex nihilo*, means “creation out of nothing” and is used to describe how God created the “heavens and the earth” – out of nothing! There is no belief in two gods, one good and one evil, that battled creation into existence. The Hebrew people believed that the one and only Lord of the universe, the One who had created them to be a covenant people and who had delivered them from slavery, was Author and Designer of all that is.

“The earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep” (Genesis 1:2) refers to a cosmic emptiness, a formless darkness, sometimes referred to as a “sea of chaos.” Without God’s continuing work of creation, there would be chaos. With God, there is order and creation. Where do you see order in the created world?

“A wind from God swept over the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2). Other translations read, “The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” The Hebrew word *ruach* means wind, breath, blow, or spirit. The New Testament Greek word *pneuma* has the same connotation of air, breath, wind, or spirit. Throughout the creation story of Genesis 1, God speaks creation into existence. God speaks a Word, “Let there be ...” and there is. Read John 1:1-5 again. The Word is Jesus and Jesus was there in the beginning!

Christian scholars use the John 1:1 depiction of Jesus as the “Word” spoken in creation and the Genesis 1:2 translation of *ruach* as “Spirit” to show throughout creation the active presence of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Genesis 1:26 reads, “Then God said, ‘Let *us* make humankind in *our* image, according to *our* likeness ...’” (italics added for emphasis). Could these plural references to God indicate the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit?

NOTES, REFLECTIONS, AND QUESTIONS

CREATOR

What is God like?

Then God *spoke*. The universe was created by a *word* (Genesis 1:3). Jews and Christians are not pantheists. We do not believe that God and the universe are one. We are not a part of the great universal Spirit, the way a drop of water is a part of an ocean. No, separateness exists between God and the created order. God spoke, and order came into being. God stands apart yet involved. God stays close, in contact with God's creation.

Look again at John 1:1-5 and Jesus as the Word. The spoken, creating Word of God "became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:14). This Word that God spoke in Creation to give life is the same Word, Jesus, that God spoke on the cross to give new life! Read Colossians 1:16-20 again. Considering Creation as found in Genesis 1, how is new life in Christ similar to God creating life in the beginning?

Wonder

People have always pondered the mystery of Creation. Why am I here? Where did the universe come from? Little children ask, "Who made God?" Giraffes and elephants amuse us; mountains and the milky way amaze us; a newborn baby fills us with wonder. With the psalmist we ask,

"What are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?" (Psalm 8:4)

We can only respond with wonder. We listen in as God confronts Job (Job 38-41). These chapters lay before our eyes the order, majesty, and mystery of Creation. They sing of the glory, goodness, and power of the Creator. The points we are taking from Job at this point in our study are:

- that the wonders of God's creation are beyond the grasp of our minds;
- that human understanding and divine understanding are vastly different (see Isaiah 55:9);
- that our power and God's power cannot be compared;
- that human values and God's values are worlds apart;
- and, above all else, that this Creator cares for and loves the creation.

The Bible does not try to prove the existence of God. Rather, the Bible explodes with praise of God's creative power. The Bible answers the questions of the heart by celebrating God's creativity and pointing toward human response.

NOTES, REFLECTIONS, AND QUESTIONS

Word and Power

Creation

Some people have trouble with science and the Bible. They either say the Bible is not true, or they separate their study of science from their faith as if God does not understand how mountains are formed or how babies are born. Yet so many scientists know they do not know everything; they recognize how many questions they cannot answer except by faith.

Modern science is revealing more and more about the complexity, yet wonder, that is the universe. Microscopic evidence shows the incredible nature of the smallest of organisms and cells. Cosmological evidence shows the majestic workings of celestial galaxies. How great is our God!

Throughout the first story of creation in Genesis 1, each point of creation is declared to be “good.” At the end of the creation narrative, “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). Some religions have taught that the material world is evil. The spiritual or the soul is good; the physical or the body is bad. Not so in Judaism and Christianity. Everything God made – knee joints and sex organs, monkeys and flying fish, the law of gravity and changing seasons – is called good, indeed “very good.”

Sabbath

A Jewish rabbi could be asked, “Why did God give us this mighty poem of Creation?” The rabbi’s answer? “To teach us to rest on the Sabbath.” Why? Because God observed the Sabbath, and that makes it sacred. When we stop our work, we remember that we are God’s creatures and that God will take care of us even when we rest. The loving God wants us to trust, to relax, to enjoy. If we rested, wondered, and appreciated on one day in seven, we would understand Jesus’ words, “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these” (Matthew 6:28-29). What an antidote for our frenzied, everyday, business-as-usual world.

Image of God

Genesis 1:27 reads, “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” Only humans are made in the image of God. What does it mean to you that you are made in God’s image?

NOTES, REFLECTIONS, AND QUESTIONS

CREATOR

The Breath of God

The second story of creation (Genesis 2:4-24) is filled with relationship. God is very present throughout, foreshadowing the very presence of Jesus Christ on earth. God exists in relationship as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and created humankind for relationship. God created a beautiful paradise “and took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it” (2:15). God spoke to Adam words of provision (“You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,” 2:17) and words of warning (“but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,” 2:17). God knew that “it is not good that the man should be alone” (2:18). God created woman for a relationship with man, for him to unite to, cleave to, or cling to.

“The Lord God formed the *ha’adam* of dust from the ground” (Genesis 2:7). The Hebrew word, *ha’adam*, is often translated “man” but could also be translated human. God actively formed humanity. In Psalm 139:13-14 we read,

“For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

What does it mean to you that God actively formed you and that you are fearfully (awesomely) and wonderfully made?

The formed *ha’adam* was just a mud sculpture until God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the *ha’adam* became a living creature” (Genesis 2:7). There is no life without the breath of God entering in. After his resurrection, Jesus met with his Disciples saying the following:

“Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” (John 20:21-22)

The breath of God gives life. The breath of Jesus gives the Holy Spirit, giving new life in power. Intentionally breathe in and out slowly. With each breath, imagine the very breath of God entering you, giving you life. Breathe in through your nose and imagine God “breathing into [your] nostrils the breath of life.” You can say a phrase with each breath (such as “breath of God, breathe in me”). This *breath prayer*, with or without words, can connect us with the Spirit God. The Holy Spirit breathes in us and creates us anew with every breath we take.

NOTES, REFLECTIONS, AND QUESTIONS

Breath Prayers

“Be still and know that I am God”
(Psalm 46:10)

1. Be still with eyes shut for a few moments.
2. Be conscious of your breathing in and out.
3. Focus on breathing in the Holy Spirit.
4. Speak a phrase with each breath:
 - a. Breathe in a name for God
 - b. Breathe out a request to God

Examples: Breath In / Breath Out

Lord Jesus / have mercy.

Speak, Lord / your servant is listening.

Creator God / my help comes from you.

Emmanuel / here I am.

Holy Spirit / show your power.

_____ / _____

5. Repeat for as long as you wish.
Listen for God to speak to you.

Word and Power

CONNECTING WITH GOD

Describe your experience with the “Breath Prayer.” What phrase did you use and why? How did the prayer connect you to the breath of life that God breathes into you?

Look back over your notes from Days 1-6. Choose any passage from this week’s reading and answer these questions:

1) How do you see the Power of God working in this Scripture passage on creation?

2) How does the creative Power of God similarly work in the world today? How does this creative Power of God work in your life?

3) During your time outdoors (see your notes on Day 3), describe your connection with God. Did you feel God speaking to you through God’s creation? Write down words, images, feeling, sounds or any other ways that you felt God in this time.

NOTES, REFLECTIONS, AND QUESTIONS

Disciples know they are made in the image of God and that they have the breath of God in them.

APPENDIX E**PRE-SURVEY**

Pre-Survey for *Disciple* and “Word and Power” Participants

Demographic Information (To Be Separated from Survey Questions)

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Marriage Status: _____

(If married, include number of years. If divorced or widowed, since what year?)

Church Membership: _____

(Include the approximate number of years you have attended this church)

Briefly describe your church involvement from childhood to present: _____

How did you become a Christian? (If you are not a Christian, what led you to become part of this Bible Study experience?)

1. Are you a Christian? How long have you been a Christian?

Yes _____ years No _____ Not Sure _____

2. What is the present condition of your spiritual life?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Weak

Strong

3. How often do you pray?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Never

Daily

All the Time

4. How often do you worship?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Never

Monthly

Weekly

Daily

5. Describe a recent personal experience with the presence of God:

6. Describe your understanding of the Holy Spirit:

7. How well do you know the Bible?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Not at all

Very well

8. How often does God speak to you through the Bible?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Not at all

Often

9. What is a favorite Bible verse or story (include the Book, Chapter, and Verse in the Bible if you know it) and why?

10. Does the Bible guide you in your daily life?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Not at all

All the time

11. How often do you consciously recall a biblical verse, story, or idea in the course of your daily life?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Not at all

Frequently

12. Are you filled with the Holy Spirit?

Yes _____ No _____ Not Sure _____

13. How often does God speak to you through thoughts or feelings?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Not at all

Often

14. How many times in the last month did you experience the following?

- A “knowing” about someone or something that came from God

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Didn’t Happen

Many Times

- Having God give you specific words to speak to someone

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Didn’t Happen

Many Times

- Praying directly with someone for their healing (physical, emotional, or spiritual)

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Didn’t Happen

Many Times

- An “insight” into a specific situation that came from God

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Didn’t Happen

Many Times

- An unusual event which seemed well beyond random chance

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Didn’t Happen

Many Times

APPENDIX F
POST-SURVEY

Post-Survey for *Disciple* and “Word and Power” Participants

Demographic Information (To Be Separated from Survey Questions)

Name: _____

Did you complete all the homework assignments? All // Most // Some // None

How has your understanding of hearing God changed through this study?

Describe an experience of how God spoke to you through a Bible reading?

How has your practice of praying changed through this study?

If possible, describe an encounter you had with God through this study:

Describe any experiences or results while praying for others through this study:

Describe any experiences with words, promptings, or feeling from God regarding another person during this study. If you followed up, what was your experience?

1. Are you a Christian? How long have you been a Christian?

Yes _____ years No _____ Not Sure _____

2. What is the present condition of your spiritual life?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Weak

Strong

3. How often do you pray?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Never

Daily

All the Time

4. How often do you worship?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Never

Monthly

Weekly

Daily

5. Describe a recent personal experience with the presence of God:

6. Describe your understanding of the Holy Spirit:

7. How well do you know the Bible?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Not at all

Very well

8. How often does God speak to you through the Bible?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Not at all

Often

9. What is a favorite Bible verse or story (include the Book, Chapter, and Verse in the Bible if you know it) and why?

10. Does the Bible guide you in your daily life?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Not at all

All the time

11. How often do you consciously recall a biblical verse, story, or idea in the course of your daily life?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Not at all

Frequently

12. Are you filled with the Holy Spirit?

Yes _____ No _____ Not Sure _____

13. How often does God speak to you through thoughts or feelings?

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Not at all

Often

14. How many times in the last month did you experience the following?

- A “knowing” about someone or something that came from God

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Didn’t Happen

Many Times

- Having God give you specific words to speak to someone

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Didn’t Happen

Many Times

- Praying directly with someone for their healing (physical, emotional, or spiritual)

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Didn’t Happen

Many Times

- An “insight” into a specific situation that came from God

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Didn’t Happen

Many Times

- An unusual event which seemed well beyond random chance

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....8.....9.....10

Didn’t Happen

Many Times

15. Describe your experience with this study. Include anything you would like, but we are looking for a personal reflection as you think back over the last eight weeks of materials.

[illegible]

APPENDIX G

POST-COURSE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Post-Course Interview Questions

1. Briefly describe your faith journey.
2. What led you to become part of this Bible Study experience?
3. How has this study helped your understanding of the Bible?
4. How often does God speak to you through the Bible?
5. Describe an experience when God spoke to you through the Bible.
6. How has your understanding of hearing God changed through your participation in this Bible Study?
7. How has your practice of praying changed as a result of your participation?
8. Describe an experience you had while praying for someone during the course of this Bible Study.
9. Have you followed up with promptings from God to pray for others as a result of your participation?
10. Describe a personal experience with the presence of God during the course of this Bible Study?
11. Did anything “miraculous” or “amazing” happen during the course of this Bible Study?
12. Describe your understanding of the Holy Spirit?
13. Are you filled with the Holy Spirit?
14. Describe an experience of God speaking to you through thoughts or feelings during the course of this Bible Study
15. How has your understanding of hearing God changed through this study?
16. How has your understanding of the Holy Spirit changed through this study?
17. Describe your overall experience with this study.
18. How could this study be improved?

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